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A KEY  
TO  
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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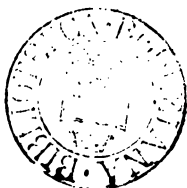
# A KEY

To the Narrative of

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BY JOHN PILKINGTON NORRIS, M.A.

CANON OF BRISTOL.



RIVINGTONS

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## Introduction

It has been well said that the religious knowledge vouchsafed before the Christian era was like the gradual dawning of light, which leads us to anticipate the rising of the sun ; that Christ's advent, when at length He came in humiliation, was like a sunrise obscured by cloud ; and that only when the 'rushing mighty wind' of Pentecost had blown aside those earlier mists, could men behold Him, as indeed He is, the source of all their light and joy.

Therefore in the 'Acts of the Apostles,' much more than in the Gospels, have we Christ revealed to us in the fulness of His strength, reigning, as He still reigns, 'at the right hand of power.' And it may well be that St. Luke meant to imply this in that opening phrase of his 'second treatise,' where he alludes to his Gospel as containing but the *beginnings* of all that Jesus did and taught. The Apostles had received a promise that they should see 'greater things than these' hereafter.

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On those 'greater things' St. Luke is now entering,—on that New Dispensation to which, as to something future, Christ's words, during His humiliation, had ever pointed:—'The Kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*;' 'On this rock *will* I build my Church;' 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them *now*;' 'Mine hour is not yet come.' Nor could it be otherwise. Christianity could not be established while Christ was still upon the earth. The Christian religion could not be taught, until the central facts of its creed, the Death and Resurrection, had been accomplished; the Christian Church could not be founded until He who was to be the Head of the Church had been glorified. *Now* all had been fulfilled; and in opening the Acts of the Apostles we open the Annals of Christ's reign and kingdom.

Clearly and vividly are we made to feel,—and herein appears most plainly the inspiration of the narrative,—that it is Christ Himself who is directing all behind the Veil. He it is who completes the number of the Apostles<sup>1</sup>, who 'sheds forth' upon them His promised Spirit<sup>2</sup>, who is ever 'working with them,' 'adding to them daily such as are being saved'<sup>3</sup>, hearing and answering their

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 24.    <sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 33.    <sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 47, see note on p. 18.

prayers<sup>1</sup>, revealing Himself visibly from time to time<sup>2</sup>, making known to them His ever widening purposes<sup>3</sup>, guiding their course in their journeyings<sup>4</sup>, with them, as at Jerusalem, so in the great cities of the Roman Empire<sup>5</sup>, as on the Galilean lake, so on the Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>;—from first to last administering the affairs of His Kingdom with an energy of divine power far exceeding anything recorded in the four Gospels.

Surely one great purpose of this book is to teach us thus to recognise the personal government of Christ throughout His Church's history. Of that Church-history of eighteen centuries, could it be written truly, this record of the first thirty years would be seen to be but a specimen page :—the first of many pages, of which the last is not yet written. When that last page comes to be written, then shall we understand, as clearly as the writer of this first page understood, the fulfilment of Christ's promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

Meantime, for us Christians of Western Christendom, trying to connect ourselves in thought with the cradle of our Faith, this book has an

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 55, ix. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvi. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xviii. 9; see also 2 Tim. iv. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.

unspeakable value :—it bridges over, by a most gradual transition, what otherwise would have been a hopeless gulf, the interval that separates the Church of the upper chamber from the Churches of Europe. If our New Testament were blank between the close of the Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles to Greece and Rome, is it too much to say that we should find a very serious difficulty in connecting the two together? Nay, further, considering how few and meagre are the allusions in the Epistles to any of the events of our Lord's Ministry, should we not feel that there was an almost painful break in the continuity of the New Testament, that we could hardly recognise in the spiritual Christ of the Epistles the Jesus of Nazareth of the four Gospels?

We open the Acts, and all is clear; we perceive at once that the main purpose of this book is to trace all through this interval the continued action of the risen Lord. We see, on the one hand, how carefully St. Luke connects his narrative with that of his Gospel, taking up the thread at the very point where he had laid it down, with that commission on Mount Olivet and the return of the Eleven to the upper chamber; we see, on the other hand, how gradually but most designedly

he is ever drawing our attention away from Jerusalem and the Apostles of Israel, fixing it more and more on the Apostle of that Western world which was to be the home of the maturer Church. Above all, we see how careful he is, in tracing the Church's progress, to show that it was Christ, not His Apostles, who led the way ;—as in His sufferings, so now in His triumphs, ' Jesus going before them, and they amazed as they followed'<sup>1</sup>. It was no impulse of his own that made Philip accost the Ethiopian stranger<sup>2</sup>; it was a shock and scandal to Peter to find himself called to eat bread with a Roman soldier<sup>3</sup>; it was with fear and alarm<sup>4</sup> that the Apostles received Saul of Tarsus into their number; it took them all by surprise to hear that ' the hand of the Lord ' was gathering together a Gentile Church at Antioch<sup>5</sup>; it was not St. Paul's free choice or determination, but ' the Spirit of Jesus '<sup>6</sup>, overruling his plans, that pushed him onward into Europe; it was the Lord Himself who made him stay in Corinth, saying, ' Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and have much people in this city '<sup>7</sup>. When he came

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 32.      <sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 26, 29.      <sup>3</sup> Acts x. 14, xi. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Acts ix. 26.      <sup>5</sup> Acts xi. 21, 22, and page 55.

<sup>6</sup> Such is the reading of the three oldest MSS. in Acts xvi. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Acts xviii. 9, 10.

to Jerusalem expecting only bonds and death<sup>1</sup>, it was the same glorified Form that again stood beside him, saying, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome'<sup>2</sup>.

Thus plainly does the inspired writer reveal to us the guiding hand of Christ in the ever westward progress of His Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

And did the guidance of Christ cease when the inspired record of it ceased? Enlightened by the teaching of this book, may we not for ourselves discern the direct action of our Lord in every great crisis of the Church's subsequent progress? How else can we explain the unextinguishable vitality of that Light which the Church has handed down from generation to generation? Crushed at one time by persecution, dimmed and shamed at another by worldliness, often narrowed to a single spark, still, sheltered by an unseen hand, and fed from secret sources, it has ever emerged and revived, to burn once more with heavenly radiance.

The martyrs of the third century were sustained by the same consciousness of Christ's presence that supported Stephen in the first:—'He is not alone who has Christ for his companion,'

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 23-25, xxi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiii. 11.

wrote Cyprian<sup>1</sup> to the sufferers at Carthage. And as St. Luke is at pains to show us how 'the persecution that arose about Stephen' was overruled to spread abroad the Gospel, so Tertullian<sup>2</sup>, two centuries later :—'The more you mow us down, the more do we increase ; the blood of Christians is their seed.'

In that great crisis of the Church when her courtier Bishops, one and all, were for accepting the creedless compromise urged upon them by Constantius, and one true Confessor—'alone against the world'—maintained the Church's independence, are we not reminded of that earlier crisis at Antioch, when all were led away<sup>3</sup> save one, and he alone maintained the freedom of Christ's Gospel ?

When the darkness of barbarism swept over the empire, and drove Christianity into the asylum of its monasteries, what secret impulse sent forth those noble missionaries from the monasteries of these islands to evangelize the Germans in their native forests<sup>4</sup> ? Was it not the same constraining Spirit who urged St. Philip along the desert road

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Apolog.* 50.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> See Neander's account of Columban and Boniface in his *Memorials of Christian Life*.



of Gaza, and moved St. Paul to 'picture forth the Crucified'<sup>1</sup> before the fickle Celts of Asia?

When the Church had triumphed over barbarism, and her very splendour was corrupting her, may we not in St. Francis of Assisi's noble protest recognise the spirit of him who shamed the traders in godliness<sup>2</sup>, by working with his own hands that he might be chargeable to none<sup>3</sup>? And may we not in both discern the impulses of Him 'who for our sakes became poor'<sup>4</sup>?

In that yet louder protest which three hundred years later shook Europe to her centre, are we not reminded of the same Apostle, and of his thrilling protest at Corinth?—'He shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed from the Synagogue, and entered into a certain man's house named Justus'<sup>5</sup>. It was not that he willingly seceded from the Synagogue of his forefathers. But the question at issue seemed to him, as it seemed to Luther, a vital one: Is salvation by

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's own expression, Gal. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 17, xi. 13, 20; 1 Tim. vi. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 7-9, and 2 Thess. iii. 8. Cp. Acts xviii. 3, and xx. 34.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xviii. 6, 7.

faith, or by outward observances<sup>1</sup>? And Christ stood by His Apostle in his secession: 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee'<sup>2</sup>.—And did not the Reformer of Wittenberg as certainly feel the strengthening presence of the Lord in his great crisis?

No less divinely guided, and happier far, our English Church—*reforming*, not seceding—finds her parallel not at Corinth, but at Berea:—'These were more noble . . . in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so'<sup>3</sup>. And the result was that the whole synagogue in a body adopted the purer teaching of the Apostle, and secession was unnecessary.

And, lastly, if the crisis of our own day be the removal of political safeguards, leaving national Churches free to stand or fall according to their hold upon the national conscience, let the student of the Acts take courage as the culminating purpose of this book more and more reveals itself:—to prepare that first generation of Christ's Church for a shock far greater, far more trying to their faith, than any that has since befallen,—the down-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xviii. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 11.

fall of Jerusalem, the 'Let us go hence'<sup>1</sup> of that great catastrophe, the slowly matured fulfilment of Christ's prophecy, the coming of that hour when neither in this place nor in that, but wherever two or three were met together in His Name, the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

<sup>1</sup> Jos. *Wars*, vi. 5. 3.

# The Acts of the Apostles

## CHAPTER I

### The Church of the Upper Chamber

ELEVEN men standing on Mount Olivet with upturned faces, watching, first in wonder, then in adoration, some One who is rising heavenward—rising bodily, His hands still uplifted as in the act of giving them His blessing—rising slowly, until a cloud comes between, and they can see Him no more. Their gaze and their attention are recalled to earth by a voice speaking to them ; and they become aware that two angels are by their side in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into the heaven ? this Jesus, who was received up from you into the heaven, shall so come in the manner in which ye beheld Him going into the heaven.’ These few words were enough : all was explained. ‘Shall so come as they had seen Him go.’ ‘In the clouds of heaven,’ as Daniel had said ; as Christ Himself had said, ‘They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.’ That cloud then which had just received Him was the cloud of glory, the cloud which they had seen once before on the Mount of Transfiguration, when ‘the voice came out of the excellent glory,’ the ancient

Shechinah<sup>1</sup>, or symbol of Jehovah's presence ; and He who, as then so now, had been withdrawn into it ; He who but now had been by their side, touching them, breathing on them ; He who for months and years had been their Teacher on the hills of Galilee, whom they had accepted indeed from the first as their Messiah, but about whose person there had hung a further mystery which they had never fully penetrated, was in some transcendent way one with Him who in this selfsame cloud of glory had led their fathers through the wilderness ! All their previous intercourse with Jesus was by this one glance transfigured. No wonder they worshipped Him ; no wonder they returned to Jerusalem—not with sorrow, as men who have lost a friend,—but 'with great joy'<sup>2</sup>, as men who feel that their Lord God is more than ever near to them<sup>3</sup> !

<sup>1</sup> The word Shechinah does not occur in the Bible,—only in the Targums ; but the luminous cloud is frequently mentioned, and always as the visible sign of the Divine presence. Compare in the Old Testament, Ex. xiii. 21, xix. 9, 18, xxiv. 16, xl. 34, 1 Kings viii. 10. In Isa. iv. 5 it is prophesied that the Shechinah should reappear in the days of the Messiah, and that it did so see Luke ii. 9, John i. 14, Mark ix. 7, compared with 2 Pet. i. 17 ; and that it will reappear at the Second Advent see Matt. xxiv. 30, xxvi. 64, and this passage (Acts i. 11).

<sup>2</sup> That the Angel of the Lord who preceded the children of Israel from Egypt in the cloud and in the fire, was (agreeably to Ex. xiii. 21, 22, compared with xiv. 19, 20 ; Numb. xx. 6) the Lord himself, possessor of the incommunicable Name *Jehovah* ; and that this Angel of the Covenant (as He is termed in Mal. iii. 1, compared with Gen. xlviii. 15, 16) is the Uncreated Word, who appeared in visible form to Jacob and Moses, and who was in the fulness of time incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, is the known undoubted faith of the Church of God.—Mill on the Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels, Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 52.

<sup>4</sup> What is the key to that promise of a speedy return to

And now they have rejoined the rest in the upper chamber;—in '*the* upper room,' St. Luke says, not '*an* upper room'; meaning doubtless the same that he had mentioned before more than once in his Gospel,—the large room which had been placed at the Lord's disposal by some disciple for His last supper; Joseph or Nicodemus it may well have been. Here they assembled daily, 120 in all. Among them, besides the Eleven, were 'the Lord's brethren' (believers now<sup>1</sup>), he of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Cleopas, Barsabas, Matthias, and others; the holy women too, and among them, last not least, now for the last time mentioned in Holy Scripture, Mary, the blessed mother of our Lord.

It was no unusual thing for the Jews thus to form themselves into separate congregations. There were so many of these congregations or synagogues in Jerusalem, each having its own chamber, that the formation of a new one would attract but little notice. By the rest of the people they would be regarded simply as a new sect, who held that the Prophet of Nazareth, who had lately made so great a sensation, was the looked-for Messiah. Their deeper faith concerning Him—that He was the Lord of the whole earth—had not yet been publicly confessed. Many abide with them for ever which pervades the Paschal discourse (John xiv.-xvi.)? Surely the thought that our Lord in going to His Father became nearer to them than ever, for in Him 'we live and move and have our being,' 'In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.' This is the key-note of that discourse, and the key-note also of this Book of the Acts.

<sup>1</sup> Compare John vii. 5. They are mentioned here too as distinct from the Eleven Apostles. They were doubtless sons of Joseph by a former marriage. See Professor Lightfoot's Essay in his Commentary on *Galatians*.

of the Pharisees, even members of the Sanhedrim, were known to favour them ; their only declared enemies were the Sadducees, who were specially irritated by their assertion that Jesus had risen from the dead. Daily, therefore, without much fear of molestation, this group of believers (men and women together) might meet in their upper chamber for their private devotions. At the hours of public prayer they repaired, like other devout Jews, to the Temple, where the women would of course be separate from the men. As every synagogue had its Elders or Presbyters, occupying the semicircular seat at the end of the chamber facing the congregation, the Eleven Apostles would naturally be the Presbyters of the Christian congregation. Our Lord's last command was that they should not depart from Jerusalem until the promise of the Father of which He had so often spoken should be fulfilled. For that new 'power from on high,' for that Baptism of the Holy Spirit 'not many days hence,' they are waiting.

Meanwhile one obvious duty is before them. He, their Master, had chosen Twelve, had meant them to be Twelve, had ever spoken of Twelve on thrones hereafter ; and one is wanting ! But how to replace him ? Which of all the disciples shall it be ? Two only they find of their whole number who fulfil the necessary conditions—witnesses of the whole Ministry from its commencement to its close. But which of the two shall it be ? Christ Himself had chosen each of them. How shall they dare to choose for Him ?

They turn instinctively to Him,—as confidently, as naturally, as if He were still standing visibly among them : 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen !'

And they cast lots for them, and the name of Matthias came forth in answer to their prayer ; so he was numbered with the Eleven Apostles.

*Twelve*, now, once more, ready to bear their witness to the twelve tribes of Israel so soon as they shall be endued with power from on high. For that they wait from day to day, continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication to their Lord that He will remember and fulfil His promise.

Two things especially we may notice in this first group of believers : their courage and their joy. Their courage,—for surely it was an act of no common courage to take upon themselves to elect and consecrate a new Apostle. How many of us would have thought it safer to leave all exactly as Christ had left it ! Not so these hundred and twenty : they see the wisdom of St. Peter's counsel that they should at once complete their organization ; and they act upon it, certain that their unseen Lord and Master will stay them if they are wrong. And clearly they were right ! Dead things only are fixed and stationary. Living things are ever growing and acting. Life, and life means growth, is the essential condition of Christ's Church ; growth by action, by a courageous energy. This is the first lesson they teach us. And let us mark next their joy. 'They returned' from Olivet 'with great joy,' St. Luke tells us. Christ was more to them now than He had ever been,—in humiliation no longer, but on His throne, all power given to Him in heaven and in earth.

During these ten days of prayerful watching and waiting, we may well believe that the thought of His great glory was their one, their only thought, absorbing into itself for the moment all their other thoughts.



His joy was fulfilled, and they were partakers of His joy. Never till now had they known how deeply they loved Him. It is often so : we do not realize our love till he whom we love is withdrawn.

They loved Him not as a human friend, but with that far deeper and more spiritual love which God alone can draw forth from us. And here was the secret of their joy. All along there had been a mystery about Him ; and now in these last days it had been more and more borne in upon them that He into whose friendship, into whose communion, into whose joy they had been admitted, was none other than He in whom Abraham trusted, the Angel of the Covenant who spake with Moses ; that in worshipping the Lord Jesus they were worshipping the God of their fathers.

And would we know what their prayer was during those ten days between the day on Olivet and the day of Pentecost ? Surely in substance none other than our own at that same season of the year :—‘ O God, the King of Glory, who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph into Thy kingdom in Heaven ; we beseech Thee leave us not comfortless, but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place (*i.e.*, into that higher communion) whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.’

## CHAPTER II

### *The Gift of the Paraclete*

IN the first chapter we endeavoured to picture to ourselves that Church of the upper chamber, consisting exclusively of those who had known our Lord on earth, 120 in all, continuing from day to day in prayerful expectation of the promised gift of power from on high. Nor had they to wait long ;—on the tenth day after the Lord's ascension came the great feast of wheat-harvest—Pentecost or Fiftieth Day (as the Greek-speaking Jews called it), when Jerusalem was once again, as at the Passover, filled to overflowing with foreign Jews and proselytes from almost every nation under heaven.

In another and far higher sense it was to prove, ere nightfall, a day of harvest, a day of first-fruits, to the Christian Church. Early in the morning<sup>1</sup> they had assembled as usual, the 120, doubtless the holy women among them, in their upper chamber, for their daily worship ; the thought of their Lord's resurrection in their minds, for it was the first day of the week ; and, blending with it perhaps, the thought of the giving of the Law, as on this day, in fire and storm on Sinai ;—when suddenly a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind entering and filling the whole house ! and over the head of every one of them<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Aug. in *Johan.*, xcii. ; Chrys. *Hom. in Acta*, iv.

men and women<sup>1</sup>, a separate flame of light, not momentary, but abiding for some minutes ! And along with these outward symbols each one felt himself impelled by some new power to ejaculate prayer and praise in languages which he had never heard<sup>2</sup>.

Like the school of the prophets of old who went forth to meet king Saul, so this new school of prophets go forth into the streets of Jerusalem, and meet the crowds who would be already assembling for the Temple service.

The foreigners, amazed to hear these Galileans chanting in their several languages the praises of God, rapidly gather round them with murmurs of wonder ; while the Jews of Jerusalem, not understanding the strange sounds, set it down to intoxication.

Then St. Peter, with the Eleven around him, filled with the new inspiration, addressed to the assembled multitude his first Christian sermon :—

‘ This sudden ecstasy (he said) was no intoxication ; —the early hour of the day might satisfy them on that point ;—no ! it was that pouring forth of God’s Spirit which Joel had foretold, as a sign of the last days, and of impending judgment.’ Having thus awakened attention, and dwelt for a while on the terribleness of that approaching judgment, he pointed to the one only salvation, to ‘ call upon the Name of the Lord.’ And who was the Lord upon whom they were to call ? That Messiah whom they had rejected, that Messiah whom

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<sup>1</sup> That women as well as men received special gifts of the Spirit appears from Acts xxi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> ‘ Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not’ (1 Cor. xiv. 22) ; on which Chrysostom remarks that the purpose of the gift was ‘ to astonish, not to instruct.’—*Hom. in 1 Cor.*, xxxvi. i.

by Gentile hands they had crucified and slain ! For, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, was clear from the 16th Psalm ;—when David said, ‘ Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption,’ he could not be speaking of himself : David had seen corruption : clearly he was speaking of the promised Messiah. And Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the prophecy. Did they require proof ? First, there were twelve eye-witnesses before them who could attest His resurrection ; and, secondly, this sudden outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which all Jerusalem was now witnessing, was abundant proof that He was even now at God’s right hand, uninjured by death and the grave. ‘ Therefore (he concluded) let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Messiah, even this Jesus whom ye crucified.’

So Peter spoke in all the power of his new inspiration. His words went right to the heart of that great multitude as to the heart of one man. They were stung with remorse. They had, then, crucified their Messiah ! The wrath of God might even now break forth upon them ! They came crowding round Peter and the rest :—‘ Sirs, brethren, what shall we do ?’ ‘ Repent !’ was the Apostle’s reply ; ‘ repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus the Christ, for remission of sins : so shall ye too become sharers of this gift of the Holy Ghost ! For (as Joel testified) the promise is to you and to your children, and to those of every land, even as many as the Lord our God shall call !’

Such was the first sermon of Christ’s Church, and mark the effect : three thousand were there and then gathered into covenant with God in Christ by Baptism.

Was it Peter's eloquence, or Peter's power, that so wrought upon that multitude? Yes, but not this alone : there was One unseen (as the last verse of this chapter tells us), who, in the power of the Holy Ghost, was moving among them.

We must not suppose that the consciences of all were equally awakened. As in the parable of the Sower, so here, the Word of God fell on hearts very variously prepared to receive it. And we shall hear almost immediately of the unworthiness of some of those who were admitted to Baptism.

But in most of them clearly it was no mere emotion, or gush of feeling, but a real conversion of the heart, showing itself in an *outward* as well as an *inward* change of life. Not only was 'the fear of God on every soul,' but we read also that 'they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.'

All these four notes of the primitive Church of Jerusalem deserve attention.

*First*, they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine or teaching. Numbers of them, probably the majority of them, were Jews from foreign parts, pilgrims to the feast, who knew little or nothing of Christ's ministry. They had much to hear and learn. Diligently they attended the expositions and catechizing of the Apostles. Some brief outline of the main facts of Christ's life on earth, as brief perhaps as the Apostles' Creed, would form the text of these daily lectures ; and along with this the fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures would be shown.

Then, *secondly*, they were steadfast in the Apostles' communion or fellowship—bound together as one family, not only by their common faith and worship,

but also by an enthusiastic wish to share everything in common, which the Apostles from the first encouraged, and of which we shall have more to say hereafter.

*Thirdly*, 'in the breaking of bread.' We need not for one moment hesitate to assign to these words a most definite meaning. Again and again—five times we have distinct mention of it<sup>1</sup>—the Lord Jesus had sanctified a meal by the solemn act of breaking bread with thanksgiving. On the most memorable of those occasions He had invested the act with a deep and mysterious significance, adding the command, 'Do this in remembrance of Me.'

Daily when they met together in their several congregations—for they must now have outgrown their one upper chamber—they seem to have remembered this command at the conclusion of their evening meal. We know from subsequent allusions to it<sup>2</sup>, that it was felt to be their most sacred pledge of union both with one another and with their Lord.

*Lastly*, they continued steadfast in their prayers. For the word is in the plural number, implying that they had fixed times of devotion<sup>3</sup>:—fixed hours for the daily assembling of these several congregations: besides their attendance as devout Israelites at the Temple ritual.

Such was the daily life of this inspired community. No wonder that such harmony and 'singleness of heart' made a deep impression on all who witnessed it, and won them 'favour with all the people.' It was as though, after a long cessation, the times of open

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. 19, xv. 36, xxvi. 26; Luke xxiv. 30; John xxi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Pearson's Lectures on the Acts, i. 13.

vision had returned, and a new school of prophets had arisen. Nor were miracles wanting. The historian expressly mentions that 'many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.' And then, after his manner, he singles out one by way of sample, either as the most remarkable, or because it led to the first outbreak of persecution. How soon after Pentecost we know not, but on one of those early days, the two friends, Peter and John, were as usual approaching one of the gates of the Temple at the hour of afternoon prayer, when a poor cripple, well known to all, asked an alms of the two Apostles. 'Look on us,' was Peter's reply. And he gave heed, expecting to receive something. 'Silver and gold I have none ; but, what I have to give, give I thee : In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk.' Reaching his hand to him, Peter raised him as he spoke ; and at once—the faith of the cripple evidently responding—the hitherto helpless tendons and ankles were strengthened, and the man sprang to his feet ; and, as though trying his new strength, went bounding into the Temple, praising and blessing God for his cure.

Every one recognised him, for he had lain all his life in that corner of the gateway. Every one spoke of the miracle. Again the astonished crowd gathered round the Apostles, and again St. Peter preached to them in the great cloister of Solomon, with the poor cripple for his text. And again the burden of his sermon was the same—the glory of the risen Lord. Yes, *He* it was, not the Apostles, who had cured the man before them,—He whom they had delivered up, and denied in the face of Pilate, and slain (thus he struck home to the conscience),—He it was, raised now to the right hand of power on high, who had

given the cripple this perfect soundness in the presence of them all. Then relenting, and opening the door to repentance: 'And now, my brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. Repent ye, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshment may be hastened; and He whom the heavens must till then receive—even the Lord Jesus—return to restore all things, as God hath prophesied by the mouth of all His prophets.'

Then St. Peter unfolded all the Scriptures from Moses downwards, tracing the eternal purpose of the Messiah's sufferings in type and sacrifice and prophecy, and the woe of those who rejected Him, and the blessedness of those who should receive Him. 'Yea, unto you first, God sent this offer of blessedness to redeem you from your sins.' . . . So the Apostle was pressing home his argument, when his sermon was rudely interrupted.

Such a concourse, such a miracle, such a sermon, could not but excite the attention of the authorities. It must not be allowed. The priests, who had been busy with the evening sacrifice in the adjoining shrine, taking with them the captain of the Levite guard (whose duty it was to keep order in the Temple), and some of the Sadducean members of the Sanhedrim, came upon the two Apostles, and arrested them.

The sun was setting, it was too late to bring them before the Sanhedrim that night. They were thrown into the Temple prison, there to await the reassembling of the Sanhedrim on the morrow.



## CHAPTER III

### External Trials of the Church

WE have now to hear of the first trials of the Church. The Apostles' public preaching in the Temple courts has drawn down on them the fiery trial of persecution. How will they bear it? While their Lord and Master was with them bodily, they had quailed under persecution: 'Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again<sup>1</sup>?' They were amazed when they saw Him resolute; 'and as they followed, they were afraid'<sup>2</sup>. When the storm burst upon them, 'they all forsook Him and fled'<sup>3</sup>!

How will they stand it now that His bodily presence is withdrawn? We shall see.

At the point where we left off our narrative, St. Peter and St. John were under arrest for the night in the Temple prison, awaiting trial before the Sanhedrim so soon as day should dawn.

The historian implies that special pains were taken to have a full gathering of the Sanhedrim. All who were of the high-priestly race were summoned and attended. They were Sadducees. This is to be noticed. Before Christ's resurrection the Pharisees were His bitterest foes. *Now*, when the resurrection is the burden of the Apostles' preaching, the Sadducees,

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Mark xiv. 50.

hating the doctrine, are their persecutors, and the Pharisees (as we shall see) are disposed to take their part.

At early dawn the two Apostles were placed at the bar in the centre of the semicircular court, and were asked *in what Name* they professed to have wrought the miracle on the cripple.

The special meaning of the question will be understood by a reference to Deut. xiii. A miracle had been done, and what did the law say about miracles? 'If there arise among you a prophet, and give thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, *Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and serve them*, then thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet.'

So spake the law: therefore if the Apostles professed to have worked the miracle in the Name, not of Jehovah, but of Jesus, then they were drawing the people after other gods, and the miracle was to be ascribed to the evil one. Hence the question 'in whose Name?' 'Jesus or Jehovah?' The issue between the new synagogue and the old could not have been more distinctly raised. And verily if these Apostles were preaching some new god, then was the Sanhedrim most righteous in denouncing them. Let the issue be tried therefore.

What was Peter's answer? Say, rather, what was the answer of that Holy Ghost who filled him (we are told) as he stood before his judges?—'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel! if we this day be questioned about the good deed done to this cripple, be it known unto you all, that in the Name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom ye crucified, whom God raised, doth this man stand whole before you!'

‘What, then,’ the whisper would run round, ‘he confesses it was not in the Name of Jehovah!’ Nay, but the Apostle had not ended. Out of their own Scriptures, out of the most confessedly Messianic of all the Psalms, St. Peter proved to them that their rejection of Jesus was the seal and sign that He was that Messiah to whom Jehovah had promised to give His own incommunicable Name. The stone which the builders rejected, now the Head Stone of the Corner. Nor was there salvation in any other Name. In the person of Jesus, Jehovah Himself had visited His people<sup>1</sup>.

Amazed by Peter’s inspired reply, so like the replies of Him who spake as none other ever spake<sup>2</sup>,—and now recognising the prisoners as the two men who had followed Jesus into that same Judgment Hall not long ago,—they consult in private; and, afraid of using violence, lest there should be an uproar, agree to threaten them, and compel them to be silent. St. Peter, who once before in that same Hall had trembled before a maid-servant, will he be daunted now?

He speaks, and John speaks with him, ‘Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’

Nor was the courage of their companions less, when they heard how they were threatened;—with one accord in their upper chamber they lifted up their voice to God, and prayed that with all boldness they might still preach His word, and that signs and wonders might continue to be done in the Name of Jesus.

And as they rose from their knees, the chamber was shaken where they were assembled; and they were

<sup>1</sup> See note <sup>1</sup> on p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 46.

filled with a fresh access of the Holy Ghost ; and going forth, they spake the Word of God with boldness.

Their prayer had been heard ; and it was answered. When next they stood in Solomon's colonnade, the effect of their inspired preaching was greater than ever. 'Multitudes both of men and women' were gathered into the Church,—'added to the Lord' is St. Luke's phrase. It seems to have been a season of much epidemic sickness ; as the Apostles passed along the streets, the people came out from their doors, with their sick on beds and couches. Still foremost among the Twelve, the greatest concourse was ever round St. Peter ; his very shadow seemed to the poor sufferers instinct with healing virtue,—their own faith really saving them<sup>1</sup>. From all the towns and villages round about they poured into Jerusalem, bringing their invalids and those that were possessed, and all were healed.

Such were the results of that prayer in the upper chamber !—a shaking of the earth indeed ! And such the courage of these twelve men ! And whence was it ? Can we doubt ? Could *they* doubt for one moment the unseen presence of their Lord ? Those long lines of sick healed, restored (as of old in the streets of Capernaum)—who had done it ? Had they ? No, it was the Lord 'working with them'<sup>2</sup> ! Those sermons of such unwonted power, were the words that issued from their lips their own ? No ! They *felt* it was not *they* who spake, but His Spirit that spake in them<sup>3</sup>. Those multitudes who crowded to their Baptism, were they their own converts ? No ! it

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 50 ; xxviii. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xvi. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. x. 20.

was 'the Lord, adding to them daily such as were being saved'<sup>1</sup>.

The contrast between the faint-heartedness of these same Apostles during our Lord's ministry and their noble courage now is to be explained thus : *then* He was with them in humiliation ; *now* He is with them in power and in glory, and in the Holy Ghost. Unless we realize this we shall not understand a single chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

A yet more startling proof of the presence of their Lord in glory, mighty to save, is given in the fifth chapter. We are going now to read of something new, quite unlike anything in the four Gospels.

The enthusiasm of the people, the rapid spread of the belief that the crucified Jesus was really risen and was their Messiah, was more than the Sadducees could brook. They laid their hands now on all the Twelve, and cast them into the common prison, summoning the Sanhedrim and elders again to meet at day-break for their trial.

The morning came ; the officers were sent to the prison to bring the prisoners into court. But they returned without them,—'the prison truly found we shut with all security, and the keepers standing without before the doors, but when we had opened we found no man within !' Astonished and perplexed, the High Priest turned to the captain of the guard, and the captain to the head-priests<sup>2</sup>, to know what had best be done, when one came into court with news,

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 47.—If our Translators had remembered that 'salvation' in the New Testament nearly always means something *present* not *final*, they would not have feared to give the literal rendering of this passage.

<sup>2</sup> The heads of the twenty-four courses of priests.

‘Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people’!

How was this? The officers could give no explanation, but the Christian historian explains all. That self-same night the Angel of the Lord had opened the prison-doors, and brought forth those twelve faithful men, and bidden them go stand once more in the Temple and preach to the people the word of life.

This miraculous deliverance is to be noted as something new. Never during His humiliation had Christ exerted His miraculous power to deliver Himself or His Apostles from their enemies. Now He is in glory, and it is otherwise: He gives them this reassuring sign that He will henceforth mightily defend them. And yet we must note this too, that the rescue of the Apostles was not His chief purpose; but rather their encouragement and the deepening of their faith. This faith, that He was ever with them though unseen, thus deepened into conviction, was to be enough for them. They were not intended, nor are we intended, to look for Angels’ interventions. Nay, this very day they were to learn how insufficient is the help of Angels, how all-sufficient the presence of Christ in His Holy Spirit.

Hardly had the Angel left them, hardly had they recommenced their teaching in the Temple, when once more they were arrested, and thrown back again (as it would seem) into their enemies’ power. The captain of the Temple guard had surrounded them with his band, and was conducting them to the bar of the Sanhedrim. What then? Was the Angel’s work in vain? No, we shall see how entirely its true and higher purpose was accomplished: as St. Paul felt

before Nero,<sup>1</sup> so they felt before the Sanhedrim (with a power of conviction which made their very judges quail), that 'the Lord stood with them, and strengthened them.' We almost hear the faltering tone of Caiaphas when he put the question, 'Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this Name?'—The name of Jesus he durst not utter. The memory of One who on that very spot had said, 'I am, and hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven!' did it not unnerve him? His next words seem to indicate as much: 'Ye are meaning to bring on us the blood of this Man!' This Man he durst not name, this Son of Man, now haply (what if it were true?) at the right hand of Power! If Caiaphas quailed before the inspired look of these mysterious men, much more might he quail at their inspired reply: 'We ought to obey God rather than men!' It may be noticed that this is given as the joint reply of all the Twelve. If the Holy Spirit put it into their mouth, may it not have been so? 'When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, . . . for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.'

Their judges were cut to the heart; a guilty conscience, working on a cowardly cruel nature, goaded them into the one savage wish to destroy these men who so awed them.


But one among them, a Pharisee and not a Sadducee, a man of higher culture and of nobler nature than the rest, the friend perhaps of Nicodemus, though not like him a believer, stood up to plead for justice and moderation. The Apostles were removed from the court; but to one of the judges, to one of the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 17.

youngest members of the Sanhedrim, the pupil of that very Gamaliel, St. Luke may well have owed his knowledge of what passed. Possibly to the young Pharisee of Tarsus Gamaliel's counsel seemed to savour of the timidity of age :—‘ Let them alone,’ Gamaliel said, ‘ for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.’

May we not recognise in this speech of Gamaliel the deep impression which St. Peter's words not many weeks before had made upon the Rabbi's mind : ‘ This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner’ ? Nay, may he not have heard that very psalm so applied before ? May he not well have been one of the Sanhedrim's deputation who asked Jesus by what authority He acted, and had been answered out of that same psalm, with the terrible addition, ‘ and whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder’ ? Well may Gamaliel have wished to insure his future, lest haply he should be found fighting against God !

So the Pharisee's counsel was adopted, and the Sadducees compromised the matter by having the Apostles scourged and then released with further threats. And the Twelve departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of the Lord.





## CHAPTER IV

### Internal Trials of the Church

SUCH were their trials from without, and such the spirit in which the Apostles met them. But meantime still more trying dangers were menacing the Church *from within*.

To understand what follows we must glance at a much debated question : What about the temporalities of this infant Church ? and what does St. Luke mean by saying that 'they had all things in common' ?

Many have understood that in these early years the Jerusalem Christians surrendered all their property as individuals into one common stock,—that *communism* was, in fact, their principle. But was this so ? Three reasons may be given for rejecting this interpretation :—

1. If so, the Apostles were introducing not only a religious, but also a social revolution. And this was directly opposed to Christ's teaching : 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's ;' and again, enjoining conformity in all external social matters, 'the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do'<sup>1</sup>. His kingdom was 'not of this world.' No, these early Christians were not social innovators, were not regarded as separatists ; they still conformed to the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 2.

observances of their fathers, circumcising their children and keeping their sabbaths,—good citizens in all respects, and ‘in great favour with the people.’ With such conduct a communistic mode of life would have been hardly compatible.

2. But further, we have clear evidence that they did not enforce any such rule of surrendering private property. St. Peter expressly explains to Ananias that he had not been *obliged* to sell his property, nor yet after it was sold to surrender the proceeds of the sale. And again, later, we hear of one of their number,—Mary, the mother of John Mark,—continuing to be the proprietor of a large house in the city.

3. There is a third reason, equally conclusive, and one that will lead us to a far more probable interpretation of St. Luke’s words. Communism and almsgiving are of course incompatible. And almsgiving on a very large scale was the characteristic practice of the early Church. The Apostles understood the spirit of their Lord’s teaching far too well to convert what He meant to be a voluntary grace into an enforced rule.

And surely this points to St. Luke’s real meaning : he is describing not an institution but the temper and spirit of these early converts. So completely had they ‘one heart and one soul,’ he tells us, that none of them could endure to regard his property as his own while his brother was in want. It is not in the original ‘had all things *in* common,’ but ‘all things were to them common.’ And that he means this,—that all things were regarded by them as common,—seems clear from what follows : ‘neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.’

So enthusiastic was their charity that those who had

property converted it into money as rapidly as they could, to enable them to give the more largely into the alms-chest of the Apostles. Nay, some of them, like Joseph Barnabas, a landowner of Cyprus, brought the whole proceeds of his sale and poured it at the Apostles' feet.

Now mark the danger to which this very enthusiasm exposed their community. Wherever there is sincere enthusiasm there is sure to arise and mingle with it a counterfeit.

Such a counterfeit was Ananias. He pretended to emulate both the enthusiasm and the munificence of Barnabas. False in both : he was trifling with men, —wishing to win credit for more than he had really done ; he was trifling with God—trying to serve both God and Mammon.

Most necessary it was that such corruption should be crushed ere it spread. Peter's inspired eye pierced to the liar's heart, and terrible was his rebuke. They had lied not to men but to God. And God smote them, and they fell down dead. Whether or no St. Peter when he first spoke foreknew the fearful effect which the Holy Spirit would give to his words, we know not.

Whether he did or not, the necessity and righteousness of the doom are clear. Treason in the camp in a crisis of danger must be visited with death. In the 'great fear which came upon all,' we seem to see the purifying, as by fire, of the conscience of the infant Church. And doubtless it was needed. Ananias and Sapphira were not the only ones, we may be sure, thus tempted to be false. Satan desired to sift the baptized as wheat ; and from the very first this sifting was permitted.

And is he not still sifting us? Are we not from time to time shocked and astonished by the collapse of some seeming respectability? Nay more, are we not at times shocked and startled to see how near, how very near, we ourselves have been to the sin of Ananias?—nay, worse, shocked and startled to find that we have actually sinned his sin,—only saved from shame because society failed to find it out; worst of all, *not* shocked and *not* startled by the discovery, and why? Because it was our own conscience only, and not society, that made the discovery! There is our comfort: we lied to God only! One who finds comfort in this, in the fact that none but God found him out, that he lied to God only, is he not sinning the very sin of Ananias? These modern sins of our plausible Christian society,—profits made, fortunes realized, reputations inflated, by means that will not bear scrutiny,—all having their cankered root in the desire to *seem* rather than to *be*, to seem righteous in the world's eye rather than be righteous in God's eye,—is it not well for us thus to see them in the burning light of an Apostle's indignation?

Such was the first great trial of the Church from within, containing a warning for all time. And now we hear of a second; and this time, too, arising from matters connected with the Church's temporalities.

We have heard of the common alms-fund of the Apostles, and how the poorer members of the Church were thus supported by the richer. Such an administration was likely, sooner or later, to give rise to jealousies; and so it came to pass.

'There was a murmuring' on the part of some that their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

The way in which the difficulty was met is full of instruction to the rulers of the Church in all ages.

Hitherto the twelve Apostles seem to have been themselves responsible for all the affairs of the Church. What could be better? Why make any change?—least of all, make change to please a few discontented people?—let them rather be rebuked and silenced. And, besides, who were these malcontents? Not the Hebrew Christians of the Holy Land, but Hellenists<sup>1</sup>, converts from among the foreign Jews, only quite lately admitted to the Church, the last who ought to have a voice. And their complaint—that their widows received less than their due from the common offertory fund,—it was mere jealousy, an unwarrantable reflection on the Apostolic College. To yield to such a complaint would be a mere compromise with what was evil, a yielding of principle to expediency which could never be right!

So possibly some of us might have reasoned. But so reasoned not the Apostles; on the contrary, with diviner insight into the laws of God's Providence, they saw intuitively that a growing society needs growth of institutions; that if its organization is to be preserved, it must not be stereotyped but expanded from time to time; and in this very murmuring they saw a sign that the time had come.

Christ may have said nothing about this new order

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<sup>1</sup> Jews born and bred among the Greek-speaking populations of the Roman Empire are called *Hellenists* in the Greek Testament. Our translators always render the word by '*Grecians*,' so distinguishing them from '*Greeks*,' by which latter word they always mean Gentiles.—See Appendix, chap. i. p. 135.

of ministers<sup>1</sup>, but Christ had said plainly that His Church was to go on growing and expanding like the branches of the mustard-tree, ever assimilating new elements; and that for these new elements the old forms might not suffice; new wine must not be put into old bottles.

‘The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world’<sup>2</sup>.

All this is deeply instructive. What we call ‘the force of circumstances’ was to the Apostles the guiding Hand of their unseen Lord. Nor less instructive is the way in which they sought His guidance,—not in their chamber with closed doors, but rather in the assembled congregation—there most of all His Holy Spirit dwelt. The Twelve called together the multitude of the disciples (we read), and explained to them the need of a division of labour, and threw upon them the responsibility of choosing seven men of honest report, whom they might appoint over this business—the almsgiving of the Church.

Seven men were chosen, all bearing Hellenist names (it may be noticed); all therefore acceptable to the aggrieved party; ‘whom they set before the Apostles; and when the Apostles had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.’ Let us mark too their solemn ordination: the choice was left to the multitude, and wisely—for that they should possess the confidence of the multitude was essential; their consecration was reserved to the Apostles.

<sup>1</sup> On the question whether the Seven were Deacons or not, see Appendix, chap. ii. pp. 144-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Morte d'Arthur*.

## CHAPTER V

### The First Martyr

OF two only of the Seven have we any particular record : of Stephen and of Philip.

Of St. Stephen's earlier history we have no information, but St. Luke bears witness to the deep impression which his saintly life had left upon all who knew him : he was 'full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost ;' 'full of grace and power ;' irresistible 'in spirit and wisdom.' One longs to believe, and one may almost venture to believe (for a reason that will appear in the sequel), that he had known our Lord on earth, that he had been one of the 120, or one of the 500, who had seen the Risen Lord.

But however this may be, enough is told us here to mark him out as (next to the Apostles) the most brilliant saint of God the Church has ever known.

His appointment as one of the Seven at once opened to him an enlarged sphere of action. He could not minister to the bodily wants of men without ministering to their spiritual needs also. He proclaimed the Gospel far and wide. 'Great wonders and miracles' were done by him. His labour as an Evangelist seems to have been chiefly among the foreign Jews : the three synagogues whose hostility he specially provoked were all Hellenist synagogues, —a synagogue of Roman Jews, *libertini*, as they were called, being freedmen,—a synagogue of African Jews,

—and a synagogue of Jews from proconsular Asia and Cilicia. The special mention of this last is to be noted; one member of that Cilician synagogue, a member also of the Sanhedrim, is not unknown to us, was not unknown, alas! to Stephen. With these foreign Jews—men of far higher culture than the Jews of Palestine—Stephen was engaged in daily controversy. And ‘none could resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake.’ Even in the heart of that young Cilician Pharisee some seeds of conviction may have been sown<sup>1</sup>, though destined to bear no fruit as yet.

<sup>1</sup> That Stephen’s teaching made a deep impression on Saul’s mind—deeper, perhaps, than he was aware of at the time—is shown not only by his touching allusion to him in Acts xxii. 20, but also by the reappearance of so many of Stephen’s phrases in the language of the Apostle of the Gentiles. St. Paul’s speech at Antioch reminds us throughout of Stephen’s defence. In his address at Athens he uses Stephen’s very words, that ‘God dwelleth not in temples made with hands.’ The difficult phrase in Gal. iii. 19, *ὁ νόμος . . . διαταγὴς δι’ ἀγγέλων*, corresponds with Stephen’s *ἐλάβετε τὸν νόμον ἐκ διαταγῶν ἀγγέλων*; while *ἐν χειρὶ μεσίου* is explained by the 38th verse of Stephen’s apology. St. Stephen’s ‘uncircumcised in heart’ seems to reappear in St. Paul’s ‘true circumcision is that of the heart.’ And lastly, St. Paul, when death approached, prayed like Stephen for those who bore him ill-will, ‘I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge’ (2 Tim. iv. 16).

That Saul was present, and a member of the Sanhedrim, is shown by his expression in Acts xxii. 20 (the self-same phrase as that of the historian, Acts viii. 1), ‘consenting to his death,’ explained by the phrase, ‘I gave my vote’ (as a member of the Sanhedrim), in Acts xxvi. 10.

‘Indeed it is not unlikely that we owe the preservation of the speech (St. Stephen’s), as we have it in this chapter, to St. Paul. For among the hostile audience of the martyr, who besides would be likely to treasure it up or to communicate it to the evangelist?’—Humphry on the Acts.



Baffled in argument they had recourse to slander. Words that Stephen may well have spoken, about the impending judgment foretold by Christ, were misrepresented as blasphemy against Moses and against God. He 'ceaseth not,' they said, 'to speak blasphemous words against this Holy Place and the Law.'

Such was the charge they laid before the Sanhedrim, bringing Stephen with some violence, it would seem, to the bar of the court. And all the seventy judges, when they looked at the prisoner, saw his face lighted with a gleam of glory, the glory of that Holy Spirit who was even then filling and strengthening his heart.

There was a pause while the witnesses gave their evidence; and then the high priest, as the presiding judge, appealed to him, 'Are these things so?' The willingness to hear the Christian is doubtless to be ascribed to the fact that the Sanhedrim was still influenced by the counsel of Gamaliel; and the Pharisees (as we have seen) were at first less hostile to the Christians than the Sadducees<sup>1</sup>. But as Stephen's defence proceeded, turning not on their favourite doctrine of a resurrection, but rather on the world-wide aspect of their Messiah's kingdom, which this Hellenist Christian seems to have preached more clearly than any before him,—a doctrine which the Pharisees abhorred,—all their forbearance was at an end; one and all became bent on his destruction.

From the sudden break at the 51st verse, it seems

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom suggests that they were awed into listening by the preternatural beauty of Stephen's countenance: 'For there is a power,' he says, 'there is a power in countenances filled with the grace of God, which makes them beautiful to those who love them, but awful and terrible to those who hate them.'—*Hom. in Acta*, xv.

clear that he was there interrupted by some burst of execration ; and in the words of bitterness which this interruption forced from Stephen, there broke forth the underlying thought which had suggested all that had gone before : ' Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ! as your fathers did, so do ye !'

' As your fathers did, so do ye !' these words contain the key to the whole of his defence. Adopting the historical<sup>1</sup> method as more likely than any other to win attention, he had designed to trace the descent of the promise from Abraham down to its fulfilment, showing how their recent rejection of the Messiah

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting and instructive (as bearing on the general question of inspiration) to notice that St. Stephen, in his historical allusions, seems to depend on his own unaided memory, and sometimes follows traditions which do not altogether agree with the Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, he speaks of the God of glory appearing to Abraham *in Mesopotamia*, agreeing with the tradition preserved in Nehemiah (ix. 7) and in Philo, but not with Genesis (xii. 1) ; again, he speaks of his leaving Haran *after his father's death*, whereas, according to Genesis, it was sixty years before Terah's death (xi. 26, xii. 4, and xi. 32) ; again, he seems to join together what God said to Abraham (Genesis xv. 13, 14) with what God said to Moses (Exodus iii. 12), and speaks of *seventy-five* souls going into Egypt instead of *seventy*, following the Septuagint, which inadvertently includes the five sons of Manasseh and Ephraim born in Egypt ; again, he mentions *Sychem* (instead of Machpelah or Hebron) as the burial-place of the patriarchs, and speaks of it as having been bought by Abraham instead of Jacob (Genesis xxxiii. 19) ; and lastly, he gives the exact age of Moses at the time of his flight, and the fact of his being learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, neither circumstance being recorded in our Scriptures. These variations are most instructive as showing that there is a *human* as well as a *divine* element in Holy Scripture.

had been rendered only too probable by their rejection of every one in whom their Messiah had been typified. 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.' So it had been with Joseph : 'moved with envy, they sold him into Egypt ;' so it had been with Moses : not Stephen but their fathers it was who had blasphemed him, thrusting him away and saying, 'Who made thee a ruler and judge over us ?' so it had been with all the prophets : which of the prophets had they not persecuted ? And if they had rejected or slain every one 'who had shown before of the coming of the Just One,'—what wonder that when He, the Messiah, came, they had been His betrayers and His murderers ?

Nor did his hearers fail to see that this was the terrible conclusion upon which his merciless logic was rapidly converging—that it was even so : they had murdered their Messiah ! They were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth, drowning his conclusion in their yells of rage. Another moment and they are hushed ; what is it ? Surely again that light ! again that unearthly radiance on Stephen's countenance ! and he is speaking, but not to them,—his upturned eye is on Another, not on them : 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God !'

Ah ! have any who read these pages ever seen the maddening effect of the thought of God on what is purely evil ? Their savage yell burst forth anew ; they stopped their ears, and flew upon him, and dragged him to the city gate ; and there, probably on the very site of our Lord's Crucifixion, they stoned him, one of their youngest members, Saul of Tarsus, being deputed apparently to see the sentence executed, and the wit-

nesses summoned according to the law to cast the first stone<sup>1</sup>. And Stephen, calling upon his Lord, and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !' kneeled down, and crying with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge !' sank beneath the second crash of stones, and fell asleep.

The very narrative seems hushed ; the excited crowd have dispersed and gone ; under the starry sky loving hands are committing that sleeping body to its rest. And the saint of God, where is he ? With Him who said, ' I go to prepare a place for you,' ' that where I am there ye may be ;' with Him to whom he had prayed, ' Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ;' with Him on whom his eye had gazed all through that dying agony ! Of all that blessed company whom our Lord had gathered round Him on earth, the first to be gathered unto Him in Heaven. For that Stephen had known the Lord on earth is surely probable,—else why and how that instant recognition when the opening Heaven revealed Him, so unlike the ' Who art thou, Lord ?' of Saul of Tarsus ? or why those self-same words upon his dying lips that had fallen from the cross ? Yes, surely we may ' take knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus ;' that he was one of those younger disciples whom Jesus had ' looked upon and loved,' marking him even then, it may be, as one to be gathered early, in His mind's eye when He prayed,

<sup>1</sup> Most of the commentators have argued, from John xviii. 31, that the whole proceeding was illegal and tumultuary. St. Paul's phrase in Acts xxvi. 10, so clearly implying that in his persecutions he was authorized to put numbers to death, seems to me conclusive that the Jews retained the power of capital punishment, and that St. Stephen's execution was a judicial proceeding. For a fuller discussion of the question, see Appendix, chap. iii.

‘ Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.’

Oh ! blessed, thrice blessed privilege, to be the first-born of that Church in Heaven, who, clothed in white raiment, circle round the throne of Him who liveth for ever and ever ! Blindly we think of them as taken prematurely from their work on earth ! Christ’s work on earth ! and has not Christ a work in Heaven, a higher, holier ministry for which He needeth ministers ? Faithful over a few things here below, are they not rulers over many things in the world of light ? Prematurely sanctified if we will, but *not* prematurely admitted to that higher ministry which is the joy of their Lord in glory !

Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here on earth, we may steadfastly look up to Heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed, after the example of Thy first Martyr, St. Stephen, praying to Thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the Right Hand of God !

## CHAPTER VI

### Philip the Evangelist

**S**T. STEPHEN'S martyrdom must have been in Tertullian's mind when he penned his memorable saying that 'the blood of Christians is seed,'—the seed of Christ's Church. For never was it so strikingly true as in the case of Stephen's death, so immediate was the growth of Christianity which sprang from his blood-shedding. Far and wide the divine seed was scattered,—'They were all *scattered*,' scattered as seed is scattered by the sower : it is the very word chosen by the historian,—'scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the Apostles*.'

On the Apostles themselves this persecution does not seem to have fallen. They were Hebrews, and (as we have more than once been reminded) constant in their attendance at the Temple-worship, and in favour with all the people.

Not so was it with the Hellenist converts, who looked up to Stephen and his colleagues as their leaders. We have seen in Stephen's defence how they struck out into bolder views of the wide-embracing scope of the Gospel, and maintained its entire independence of the Temple ritual. Upon them, therefore, the persecution burst, and the people cared not to befriend them. They fled from Jerusalem. Accompanied, doubtless, by their chosen ministers, the six survivors

of the Seven, they made their way into Samaria, and towards the Roman towns along the coast. Our historian, after his manner, selects one, Philip, by way of sample of the rest, and to show us how signally Christ overruled this persecution for the greater glory of His Church.

In a city of Samaria,—Sychar possibly, where Christ Himself, some eight years before, had spent two memorable days, foretelling this harvesting of the Gospel seed,—we now find this Evangelist proclaiming the great news of His glorification.

These Samaritans, true to their Assyrian descent, were an impressible, superstitious people. An impostor, named Simon, taking advantage of the general expectation of a Messiah<sup>1</sup>, was at this time by his magical arts persuading them to receive himself as ‘some great one,’ as ‘the power of God that is called great,’ one (that is) of a higher order than the Angels.<sup>2</sup> But the far greater wonders which they now saw Philip performing, evil spirits cast out, the palsied cured, lame men healed, drew the multitude away from Simon after Philip. And Simon himself, conscious of his own falsehoods, stood aghast at these genuine miracles of the Christian teacher, and envied him his power. This lower motive, mingling doubtless with other better motives, led him to seek Baptism and profess Christianity. His admission by Philip is a fact that throws light on the history of the early Church, showing that real conversion of the heart to God did not always accompany Baptism. St. Paul says, ‘With the mouth confession is made unto salvation,’ meaning by ‘sal-

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> The expression seems to belong to the Gnostic phraseology.

vation' (as usual) admission to Baptism. And it is clear that this open and public profession of Christianity, requiring as it did no little courage and self-denial, was accepted as presumptive proof of sincerity. We can hardly wonder that of the multitudes thus charitably admitted,—thousands perhaps in a single day,—some, like Simon, proved unworthy of their high calling. How Simon's worldly ambition resisted God's grace we shall hear in the sequel.

The news of Philip's success among the Samaritans reached the ears of the Apostolic College at Jerusalem. Was it even so? Were others then besides the twelve tribes of Israel to be included in the Kingdom? This unfolding of Christ's purpose was new to them, and called for careful inquiry and prayer. The two chief Apostles, Peter and John, hastened at once to the scene of Philip's labours. 'Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not'<sup>1</sup>, Christ had once said to them; and yet on the Ascension Day there had been that other charge, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria.' They will leave the solution to their risen Lord. They will visit these converts, and pray for them; and if the Holy Ghost descends on them too, as on the Jewish converts, then their doubt will be answered. And so it was. They prayed for them; and laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. That this descent of the Holy Ghost was accompanied by some outward and visible manifestation is clear, for we read that 'when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money' for it. If it had been an inward experience only, no such desire would have risen in Simon's

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 5.



carnal mind. Plainly some outward startling effect attended it. For his own self-glorifying purposes Simon coveted the gift. An age of miracles could hardly escape this danger, that many would covet the new power for unworthy purposes. Simon's case is singled out by the historian to show us how the Apostles dealt with such corrupt motives. Well may Simon have trembled at the holy indignation of St. Peter ! well may he, conscience-stricken, have entreated the Apostle to intercede for him ! How far his repentance was sincere we know not. The Church has branded with his name the sin of Simony, which is properly the sin of seeking appointment to any holy function from corrupt motives.

How long the two Apostles remained in the towns of Samaria we are not told. When they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, confirming the converts whom Philip and his companions had baptized (as St. Paul longed to *confirm* the Roman converts by 'imparting to them some spiritual gift'<sup>1</sup>), they returned to Jerusalem.

Thus did the Church by a sudden expansion push her frontier over the villages and towns of Samaria ; and this not by man's design ; but clearly by the overruling of Him who in heaven, that is, in the unseen spiritual world, was ever at the side of His Apostles, directing all.

Nor was the movement confined to Samaria. Into Damascus, into Antioch in the far north, these Hellenist refugees carried their glad tidings. Nay, 'the Morians' land'—Ethiopia—was soon to 'stretch out her hands unto God.'

One of St. Luke's rapid characteristic anecdotes

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 11.

shows how plainly this too was the direct act of Christ.

'The Angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went,'—went on foot, apparently, along that desolate way towards the Egyptian frontier, wondering what this new purpose of his unseen Lord might be. One other traveller Christ's Providence was also guiding across that lonely tract—a proselyte to Judaism, who had been attending the feast at Jerusalem, the chamberlain of the Ethiopian Queen.

He is in his chariot, reading aloud the sacred book. Philip feels a sudden impulse of the Holy Spirit to overtake the chariot. Like Elijah of old, he runs, and coming alongside overhears the swarthy African reading aloud the Greek version of Isaiah,—the 53d chapter, so prophetic of Him whom as yet he knew not.

Under the same impulse Philip accosts him :—  
'Dost thou heed what thou dost read?'<sup>1</sup> The chamberlain, thinking this was some pilgrim Rabbi, invites him to sit by his side in the chariot, and the Evangelist explains the passage, and, making it his text, 'preached Jesus unto him.'

The chamberlain's heart was opened to the truth<sup>2</sup>, and by his own desire he was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing ; went on his way, to plant, perhaps, the Church of Christ in that distant Abyssinia, where

<sup>1</sup> Our translation loses the play on the words, *γινώσκεις & ἀναγινώσκεις* ;

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Burnet's account of the last hours of Lord Rochester, how by this same chapter of Isaiah his heart was softened, and his sceptical mind convinced, will occur to those who have read it.

our English soldiers, three years ago, found a fading lamp of Christian truth still flickering.

But for Philip Christ had further work ; all through those towns of the Mediterranean sea-board, he worked his way back to the great Roman seaport of Cæsarea, where twenty years later we shall find him living with his family<sup>1</sup>.

Thus north and south, far and wide, the Christians spread. Wherever there was a synagogue of Jews<sup>2</sup> there some Christian, standing up to read in turn, found occasion to preach Jesus the Messiah.

When tidings of this reached the Sanhedrim, when they found that by stirring the fierce fire of persecution they had but scattered its embers, and so kindled the new light far and wide, well might the words of Gamaliel occur to some, 'What if haply they were fighting against God ?'

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxi. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 20, xxii. 19.

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Conversion of Saul*

WHETHER any such misgivings, whether any recollections of the dying look and words of Stephen were even now haunting the conscience of that young Pharisee who had acted as sheriff of the Sanhedrim in Stephen's execution, and who was now the fiercest persecutor of the Christians, we know not. Possibly it was so—possibly (for such is human nature) a secret and growing uneasiness was goading Saul onward, to stifle such whisperings of conscience in the excitement of religious passion.

Armed with letters of authority from the Sanhedrim, as their chief inquisitor, we find him setting forth on a commission to Damascus—a five or six days' journey—for over the synagogues of the Dispersion the Sanhedrim seems to have had a kind of jurisdiction<sup>1</sup>—to hold court there, and make search for heretics, and bring them bound, men or women, to Jerusalem.

In the enforced leisure of such a journey, under the reaction of solitude on a mind so finely strung, withdrawn now from the daily stimulus of the sights and sounds of conflict, and the impassioned harangues of the Sanhedrim, one may well imagine that a thousand unbidden thoughts were troubling him ; and, above all, the image of that dying man and the echo of his

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, chap. iii. p. 149.

words, 'the heavens opened' and 'Jesus standing at the right hand of God.'

It may have been so ; and any other historian might have sought thus to fix our attention on the workings of Saul's heart. Not so St. Luke : not one word of this. Not on Saul, nor on the workings of Saul's heart, but on One unseen, and on the counsels of His Providence, St. Luke would fix our attention : *he* can never forget that this history is but a continuation of that 'former treatise,' that it is the continued working of the Lord Jesus that he is inspired to reveal to us. The method of that divine working has already been variously illustrated. We have seen how their unseen Lord was ever acting,—guiding the lot, answering the prayer, pouring forth His Spirit in the upper chamber, prompting words that none could withstand, attesting those words with signs of power, touching the hearts of thousands in the Temple, overruling the priests' counsel in the Sanhedrim, baffling their malice in the prison, restraining persecution till the central Church was consolidated ; then, when all was ripe for dispersion, permitting it ; guiding them in this dispersion, now by a sudden inspiration, now by an angel's ministry ; ever 'working with them' (such is St. Luke's phrase), with them in the upper chamber, with them in the Temple, with them before rulers, with them in the dungeon, with them in their solitude, with them in the crowd ;—*such* has been the Lord's method of working hitherto, as revealed in St. Luke's narrative : an ever-present Power, though unseen.

And now a crisis has arrived ; and 'the arm of that Lord,' whom the heavens had received, must be 'revealed' yet more directly and visibly.

On that young Pharisee, on that chief persecutor of

His Church, as he journeys to Damascus, the Lord's eye is fixed. He is a chosen vessel, and the Lord has need of him. The Lord Jesus Himself will speak to him, will appear to him. For he is not only to hear and believe, but he is also to be an eye-witness of the Resurrection of the Lord. *Therefore* that flash of light, outshining even the noontide sun; and therefore in the centre of the light, discerned by Saul only<sup>1</sup>, that Form, that Countenance, which once seen could never be forgotten. 'Have I not *seen* the Lord Jesus?' he wrote twenty years after this. And those words, a mere sound as of thunder perhaps to the bystanders<sup>2</sup>, but to Saul clear and distinct, calling him by name in his own Hebrew tongue, and saying, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me!' And again, in answer to his trembling question, 'I am Jesus whom thou art persecuting.' And then in proverb and in parable (as so often with the Twelve of old),—'Tis hard for thee to kick against the goad,'—reminding us of His other proverb, 'Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken.' Christ's power was irresistible. *Irresistible!* how this conviction must have been borne in upon the soul of Saul in that terrible hour! For the first time in his life brought face to face with God,—not with his idea of God, but with God Himself!

Was it a dream? The voice said, 'Rise and stand upon thy feet!' And he rose from the earth, and opened his eyes to look around,—and he was *blind*! This was no dream. Blind! Had he not been blind to God, blind spiritually, up to this very hour? and now he knows it. He had thought to be a leader, and now he is groping for a hand to guide him, blind and utterly dependent. That Law to which he had trusted

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Acts ix. 7, and xxii. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Comp. John xii. 29.

in his pride, it has slain him ! Ordained to life, he has found it to be unto death ! O wretched man ! who shall deliver him from the body of this death ?

So for three days, blind, prostrate body and soul, eating nothing, drinking nothing, in that house of Judas in Damascus, whither his servants had conveyed him. Will no relief be given him in this utter misery ? Yes ; '*he prayeth.*' Praying the prayer which never fails, the prayer of a broken and a contrite heart, there comes to him in a vision one named Ananias putting his hand upon his eyes, and healing him. And this, too, is it a mere dream in his blindness ? Anxiously he waits, and on the third day the vision is fulfilled.

Ananias (one of the despised brotherhood whom he had meant to carry bound to Jerusalem) is at the door, is by his side : ' Brother Saul, receive thy sight ! ' and lo ! his eyes are opened ; he wakes from his three days' darkness, from the valley of the shadow of that spiritual death in which for three days he had lain ; he rises on this third day to newness of life, and in Holy Baptism his sins are washed away.

Looking back in after years on this crisis of his life, one only phrase could he find to describe it : he had been crucified with Christ, and with Christ he had risen again. The thought and the phrase are peculiar to St. Paul. Are we wrong in feeling very sure that the three days' interval helped to suggest it ? And, once suggested, how the thought would grow upon him that this was the deep meaning of the crisis ! He had learned to know Christ by ' being made conformable to His death ' (Phil. iii. 10), ' a partaker of His sufferings ' (2 Cor. i. 7), ' crucified with Christ ' (Gal. ii. 20), ' the world crucified to him and he to the world ' (vi.

14), 'the old man crucified with Christ' (Rom. vi. 6), 'dying with Christ,' 'buried with Him by baptism into death' (vi. 4), 'rising with him to newness of life,' 'even as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father.' Henceforth his life is 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3), the life he lived was not his own,—'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20).

All through his Epistles the idea is ever reappearing, bearing witness to the spiritual anguish of those three days, in which his whole past self with all its pride and wilfulness had been crushed to death within him; and bearing witness also to the deep joy and peace of his humbled spirit when from the waters of Baptism he seemed to rise as by a new birth into the sunshine of God's forgiveness.

Deeply instructive it is, especially for those who are apt to think that God's grace may accomplish its whole work suddenly in the heart of man, to know that ten long years elapsed before the Holy Ghost said 'Separate me Saul for the work whereunto I have called him,'—ten long years before he was ordained by the laying on of hands for the work of an Apostle. After a retirement into Arabia for how long we know not, he seems to have returned to Damascus, and there to have essayed to preach the word. But his time was not yet come. The Jews would fain have assassinated him, and the Governor or Ethnarch<sup>1</sup> placed

<sup>1</sup> Damascus, on the re-arrangement of eastern affairs that followed the accession of Caius and the banishment of Antipas, seems to have been made over to Aretas, the Arabian chief, who reigned at Petra, and governed by his Ethnarch or Vizier. At least so Wieseler argues; conclusively, in the



soldiers at their disposal for this purpose. The Christians lowered Saul from the window of a house upon the city wall, and he escaped to Jerusalem.

This visit to Jerusalem, so briefly noticed in St. Luke's narrative, is full of interest. Barnabas, whom he may have known in his youth (for between Tarsus and Cyprus there was constant communication), introduced him to St. Peter and St. James<sup>1</sup>, the other Apostles being apparently absent from Jerusalem. He seems to have been St. Peter's guest<sup>2</sup>, and to have intended to bear his witness at once to the Jews, under an impression that his close connection with the persecutors in former days would incline them to listen to him<sup>3</sup>. But the Lord Jesus knew better the implacable hatred of the Jews, and how at that moment the Hellenists were plotting to kill him ; and, appearing to him in the Temple, commanded him to leave Jerusalem instantly. So on the fifteenth day his visit was abruptly ended, and the disciples conveyed him to the sea-coast to take ship for Tarsus.

There for many years we lose sight of him.

While Christ was thus slowly and silently maturing the future Apostle of the Gentiles, others were to carry on the work of the Gospel ; and to the labours of St. Peter, during this interval, our narrative now turns.

opinion of Dean Howson. If this be so, St. Paul's conversion must have nearly coincided with the last year of Tiberius.

<sup>1</sup> The Lord's brother, and counted as an Apostle, though not one of the Twelve.

<sup>2</sup> The word used in Gal. i. 18 is properly to 'visit,' and this agrees with St. Luke's expression, 'coming in and going out' with the Apostles—implying daily intercourse.

<sup>3</sup> Such seems to be his thought in Acts xxii. 19, 20.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Middle Wall of Partition broken down*

IN looking back at the crisis in the development of the Church which we have now reached in our narrative, we may partly perceive how necessary was St. Paul's banishment by his Divine Master from Jerusalem at this conjuncture.

He seems to have come there with one absorbing, self-accusing thought, that he owed it to his Lord to take up and carry on the work of 'His martyr Stephen,' which in his blindness he had cut short. With this view he had thrown himself into the synagogues of the Hellenists, and already in this brief fortnight rekindled the fierce conflict between those who embraced and those who rejected the Gospel.

Nor was that all ; it is clear from the allusions to this visit in the Epistle to the Galatians, that the relations in which he stood to the Elder Apostles were full of difficulties which might even threaten the internal peace of the Church.

The times were not ripe, nor were the minds of the elder Apostles prepared for that larger Gospel with which Paul was charged. The Twelve had thus far only known Christ as the Messiah of Israel. We can hardly realize at this distance of time what a shock and surprise *to them* was the admission of *uncircumcised* Gentiles to the Church. That the Jews of the Dispersion should be gathered into the Church they

expected ; that with them numbers of Gentiles, who, as proselytes, had adopted Judaism and been circumcised, should also be included, they were led to expect by many of their Lord's Parables ; but that those Parables pointed to the direct admission of *uncircumcised* Gentiles, this had never occurred to them. Gradually and slowly, partly by *direct* and partly by *indirect* leadings of Providence, Christ was revealing it.

To trace the growth of this new idea in the Apostles' minds, and to show how their Jewish prejudices were broken down, by what we call the force of circumstances, is clearly one of St. Luke's main purposes in these early chapters of his history.

First, we have the deep impression made by the Pentecostal miracle on thousands of foreign Jews or Hellenists ; we find St. Peter confessing that the promise was not to the seed of Israel only, but 'to them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' We find him soon after consenting to the separate organization of these Hellenist Christians with officers of their own. Then in the speech of Stephen we have a specimen of the broad comprehensive views of Christianity put forth by these foreigners. We see them dispersed by the persecution which his words provoked, and carrying the glad tidings of the Gospel far beyond the limits of the Apostles' preaching, to the very frontiers of Judaism. We see one of them, by a bold venture, proclaiming Christ in the heart of Samaria, and the Apostolic College accepting his success as a sign of Christ's approval ; and soon after an Ethiopian proselyte is baptized by the same ever-forward Evangelist.

Still the Hellenist, the Samaritan, the Proselyte, were all *circumcised*, Jews by adoption if not by birth,

and therefore within the pale of Israel. Some further revelation of Christ's great purpose was needed. And the time was ripening for it : for already there might be heard the muttered thunder of that storm which thirty years later was to burst upon Jerusalem. Tiberius was dead. His crazy successor, in spite of the warnings of his friend Herod Agrippa, and the embassy of the learned Philo, was bent on being worshipped in Jerusalem, and was goading the Jews to frenzy by his attempts to set up his statue in their Temple<sup>1</sup>. Petronius was marching against them with his two legions to enforce the mad resolution of the Emperor. While this yet more dreaded enemy was thus engrossing the attention of the Sanhedrim, we may well understand that their persecution of the Christians would be suspended ; moreover, the two great actors in the crime of the Crucifixion had just been removed,—Pilate banished, Caiaphas deposed. Thus it was that the four years of Caius's reign, miserable as they were to the rest of the world, brought peace to the Christians. 'The Churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified ; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.'

During this lull of persecution Christ was preparing His Apostles for the loosening of the Gospel from Jerusalem. We see it in this 'multiplication of the churches'<sup>2</sup>, in this description of them as the churches of 'Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria,' in the more

<sup>1</sup> That this outrage of Caligula may have suggested the description of 2 Thess. ii. 4, is possible ; but that he was the 'man of sin' (as Grotius supposed) is impossible, for he died before the Epistle was written.

<sup>2</sup> Whether we read 'church' or 'churches' in Acts ix. 31, the meaning is the same.

frequent absence of the Twelve on missionary tours, most of all perhaps in their appointment of James, the Lord's brother, to be the stationary head (or—in the language of a later day—the Bishop) of the Jerusalem Church, as though the Twelve no longer regarded the Holy City as their permanent home.

Still, in Peter and James's hesitation to receive Saul, only overcome by the intercession of Barnabas, in the anxiety and doubt with which they received news of what was going on in Samaria and afterwards in Antioch, in the jealousy and anger with which the Hebrew Christians heard that Peter had eaten bread with the uncircumcised, we perceive plainly how ill prepared the Jerusalem Church was to accept the larger Gospel with which St. Paul was charged, and how any premature announcement of it might (humanly speaking) have threatened the Church with disruption within twelve years of its foundation—the Hebrew Christians cleaving to James and the Holy City on the one side, and on the other the Hellenist converts seceding under Barnabas and Saul and the survivors of the Seven.

We are now to hear how the ever-watchful care of the risen Lord overruled the crisis, and prepared the elder Apostles 'to give the right hand of fellowship' to the Apostle of the uncircumcision.

St. Peter on a tour of visitation had been travelling through the towns of the great plain of Sharon. At Lydda he had healed the paralytic Æneas, and all who saw the miracle had embraced the faith. At Joppa he had restored Dorcas to her sorrowing friends by a yet more astounding effort of divine power, for the lifeless form was being laid out for burial.

The fame of these miracles may or may not have reached the Roman garrison at Cæsarea. On an

officer of that garrison, an Italian bearing the name of one of the noblest Roman families, our attention is now fixed. Through Cornelius the Apostle's mind is to be opened to accept the approaching development of Christ's Church.

No careful reader of the Acts can fail to notice how similar was Christ's method of working in the two cases of Saul's conversion and that of Cornelius. In both cases two simultaneous revelations are made,—one to him who is to be converted, the other to him who is to baptize the convert. The purpose is evident. Saul in his vision saw a man named Ananias coming in to give him sight. Cornelius in his vision is directed to send for one Simon surnamed Peter. Thus a sign or token is given to each whereby he may know that the vision is no mere dream. How irresistible must have been the conviction of this, when Saul at Damascus and Cornelius at Cæsarea found the promised messenger at their doors, saying they too had had their visions and had been divinely instructed to come! We may notice, too, in both cases, the minute particularity of the commission. The same Lord who on earth had directed Peter and John to the street of Jerusalem and the very house where they should see the man with the pitcher of water, now, at the right hand of God in heaven, knows no less minutely where to find His saints: directing Ananias to the street called Straight, to the house of Judas where Saul lodged; directing Cornelius to send to Joppa to the house of one Simon the tanner, by the sea-side, where Peter should be found.

Nor does the parallelism end here: in both cases Christ's minister is at first reluctant; Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man,

how much evil he hath done to Thy saints.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me.' St. Peter too : 'Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean ;' and the answer, 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.'

And one point more, full of instruction : in both cases he for whose salvation the Lord in Heaven is thus caring, has been praying : 'Behold, he prayeth,' is Christ's brief description of Saul's state of mind ; 'Cornelius, thy prayer is heard,' is the blessed announcement to the centurion.

In one respect, necessarily, the two cases are in contrast : in the one the effect on the convert is everything, and of the minister we hear no more : in the other case the effect on the Apostolic minister is all-important, and of the convert Cornelius we hear no more.

Whether, when the Italian cohort was ordered home, Cornelius was instrumental in founding the Church at Rome, which St. Paul addressed sixteen years later, as being men of some standing, we cannot tell.

All the interest of the narrative turns upon St. Peter. The question was forced upon him, 'Shall I preach Christ to this uncircumcised Roman ?' True, the Roman was a worshipper of the God of Israel, one of those who in later times came to be called proselytes of the gate, and clearly a most devout one ; but he was not a proselyte of the Covenant, *he was not circumcised*. Should the Apostle preach Christ to him ? The vision left him no option. It was the Lord's will. But a further question remained : If he listened, and believed on Jesus, should he be baptized without being first

circumcised? Before the question arose, the Lord had answered it. Ere Peter's discourse was ended the Holy Ghost had fallen, as on the 120 in the upper chamber, so now on this Gentile and his household and friends. Whether the light was seen now, as then, over the head of each, we are not told. It is most probable, for it is implied that the outpouring was in some way *visible*; and certainly it was accompanied by the same gift of tongues. How could Peter forbid the Baptism by water of those whom Christ had thus Himself baptized with the Holy Ghost?

Thus Peter defended what he had done on his return to the Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem. That one of the Apostles should have eaten bread in the house of a Gentile, and preached Christ to him, and, most strange of all, admitted him to baptism, shocked 'them that were of the circumcision.' Not until St. Peter had shown how clearly he had followed the guiding hand of Christ in all this, did their scruples give way. Who was Peter that he should withstand God?

Deeply interesting is the candour with which they accept the new truth: 'When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.'

Thus was the Lord preparing the minds of the Apostles for the fulness of the great truth which He had Himself taught the woman of Samaria, that in no one place more than another, by no one nation more than by another, was God to be worshipped.



## CHAPTER IX

### *Foundation of the Antioch Church and Flight of the Apostles from Jerusalem*

WHETHER it was before or after Christ's conversion of Cornelius we cannot say, but about this time tidings reached the Jerusalem Church which—but for this all-important revelation to St. Peter—might have caused grievous dissension and difficulty. From the general tenor of St. Luke's narrative, he seems to intend us to understand that the facts which he is proceeding to relate had occurred before or during St. Peter's mission to Joppa and Cæsarea, but that the report of them did not reach Jerusalem until after his return.

The facts were these:—The Hellenist Evangelists, who had been dispersed (as we have seen) after the death of their great leader, St. Stephen, had planted a Church in the great capital of the Syrian province, Antioch, in the far north. In rank and population Antioch was the *third* city of the Empire. Luxurious Romans had built their villas along the banks of its beautiful river. A crowd of Greek adventurers and Jewish impostors ministered to their vices and superstitions. A greater contrast to Jerusalem could not be. But Antioch lay on the great thoroughfare of the nations in constant intercourse with Rome; and was destined for many years to be the great mission-centre of Christ's Church.

Hither then these Cyprian and Cyrenian refugees


found their way with the tidings of the Gospel, and had gathered together a congregation of believers. For a while none but the circumcised—Jews or proselytes—had been admitted, and their reception would be simply a matter of congratulation to the mother-Church. But presently the news reached Jerusalem that the uncircumcised Gentiles<sup>1</sup> also of Antioch were being converted to the faith.

‘The Kingdom of Heaven was suffering violence, and the violent were taking it by force.’

We see now how providentially, by the revelation to St. Peter, the Lord had been preparing His Apostles for what otherwise would have been an insuperable shock to them. As it is, they hesitate. It did not certainly follow that because the Holy Ghost had claimed Cornelius for Christ He was also sanctioning the Baptism of these Antioch Gentiles. They resolve to send one of their number to see and report whether it be really so, and whether the hand of the Lord is in it. Barnabas is selected,—one whom they could trust, and one who at the same time would be likely, both as a Cypriote and as the friend of Saul, to be favourably inclined to them. The effect on Barnabas must be told in St. Luke’s words: ‘When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all, that they should cleave resolutely to the Lord. For (St. Luke adds) Barnabas was a benevolent man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith,’—not one therefore to regard with jealousy this influx of the uncircumcised.

At once he seemed to see that here at last was an

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 20. That *Greeks*, not *Grecians*, is the correct reading, and for the distinction between the two, see Appendix, chap. i., and note on page 135.



opening for his friend, who at Tarsus was still waiting for his promised call, to enter upon his work as the Apostle of the Gentiles. He hastened to Tarsus, and returned with Saul to Antioch. A whole year the two friends worked there together, adding daily new converts to the Synagogue of *Christians*. For here first, in the Romanized city of Antioch, they got their Latin name of 'Christians.' Heretofore they had made their converts so exclusively from among Jews or Judaizers, that the Romans, always contemptuously indifferent to foreigners, had not cared to distinguish them from any other Jewish sect. But now, when numbers of their own people were joining them, they gave them that separate name by which the Church has ever since been known.

Thus, in the Jerusalem Church (where the prejudice was strongest) by direct revelation, and in the Antioch Church by what some might call an impulse of religious zeal—in which we learn to recognise an inspiration of the Holy Ghost,—the barrier, the middle wall of partition, was broken down, and the doors of Christ's Church were thrown wide open to the outlying Gentile world. Looking back we may well see how needful it was that the Church should be thus gradually weaned from its first cradle. But the Apostles, with the Temple still standing, clinging, as for years they did, to its ritual and hours of prayer, were slow to learn the lesson. One more step was needed to force the lesson home to their minds—*they must themselves be scattered*. And thus it came to pass.

Herod Agrippa<sup>1</sup> had returned from the Imperial

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke calls him Herod, Josephus calls him Agrippa; the Syriac translation has 'Herod who was surnamed Agrippa,' in Acts xii. 1.

Court on the accession of Claudius (A.D. 41), to mount the throne of his grandfather. That throne, which he had won by flattery of the Emperor, he would fain secure by flattery of the Jewish people. Already he had procured for them a promise from the besotted Caius that he would no longer force upon them the worship of his image<sup>1</sup>. His next flattery was to indulge their hatred of the Christians by once more turning upon them the sword of persecution. The Passover of A.D. 44 having apparently brought the Apostles again to Jerusalem, 'he killed James the brother of John with the sword.'

With such striking brevity is the martyrdom of one of the three chiefest Apostles noticed! St. Luke's purpose was clearly not to write biographies; but rather to trace continuously the main course of the Gospel's progress from Jerusalem to Rome. Hence the minute account of Stephen's death, so closely connected with Saul's heavenly commission; and hence this merest allusion in passing to St. James's death, lying as it did out of the course of his main purpose. Clement of Alexandria, writing only 150 years afterwards, vouches for the truth of an anecdote too beautiful to be lost; how the prosecutor was so moved by the Martyr's good confession, that he declared himself a Christian on the spot, and both were led away to execution; on the road, the penitent man asked forgiveness of St. James, who, looking awhile upon him, said, 'Peace be unto thee!' and kissed him. And so both were beheaded<sup>2</sup>.

Seeing that the death of James 'pleased the people,

<sup>1</sup> Jos. *Ant.* xviii. 8. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The anecdote is preserved by Eusebius in his *Eccles. Hist.* ii. 9.

Herod proceeded further to take Peter also.' The Roman soldiers hurried him to prison, and a guard was told off to watch him till after the Feast, when he was to be delivered to the Sanhedrim that they might do their worst. How prayer was unceasingly offered for his deliverance, how the prayer was heard, how in the dead hour of the night Peter was awakened by the sudden light, and felt the angel's hand upon him, and the chains falling from his wrists, and was led forth between the sentries and through the great iron door that opened of its own accord, and how, awakening from his trance, he found himself in the streets under the full Paschal moon, and made his way to Mary's house, where the Church was still assembled for prayer,—all this is told most strikingly. Nor does the historian omit to mention the fearful retribution which not many months later overtook the persecutor of Christ's Apostle,—recorded also by Josephus<sup>1</sup>, who tells us how in the theatre at Cæsarea the rays of the rising sun falling on the silver lace of the king's robe, his flatterers shouted that he was a god, and how Herod, accepting their blasphemy, was seized with a horrible disease, and died on the fifth day.

Not on Herod, however, but on Peter and the rest of the Apostles, our interest is now fixed. After declaring how the Lord had delivered him, he bids the brethren report it all to James—the other Apostles having doubtless fled when they saw how they specially were being singled out for persecution—and then himself leaves Jerusalem.

Whither St. Peter went we are not told. Some have said to Rome. But the absence of all allusion to any such founder of their Church in St. Paul's

<sup>1</sup> *Ant.* xix. 8. 2.

Epistle to the Romans, and, still more conclusively, his anxiety to visit them himself that he might impart to them those Pentecostal gifts<sup>1</sup> which none but an Apostle could bestow, render it improbable, if not impossible, that Peter can have journeyed thither.

It is enough for us to know that the Apostolic College was broken up by this persecution. Jerusalem was no longer a safe home for them. A few months later, when Barnabas and Saul brought the contributions of the Antioch Church to the poor Christians of Jerusalem in the time of the famine, they found none but the Presbyters<sup>2</sup> in charge of the Jerusalem Church.

The Apostles were gone: whither we know not. Once again, and once only, so far as appears, they were to meet in the Holy City, at the time of the Council. But Jerusalem is no more their home. Christ's lesson is now complete. No earthly centre can be needed for His Church, while His promise holds, that wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xi. 30.

## CHAPTER X

### *The First Mission to the Gentiles*

WE are now entering upon the second portion of the Acts of the Apostles. Hitherto the growth of the *Hebrew-Christian* Church, spreading gradually over the Holy Land with Jerusalem for its centre, under the direction of the Apostolic College, has been our subject. We are now to trace the formation of the *Gentile-Christian* Churches, having Antioch as their centre and St. Paul for their founder.

To some it has seemed a strange thing that St. Luke at this point of his narrative should so completely forsake the elder Apostles, and devote himself henceforth so exclusively to the Apostle Paul. But to one who rightly understands the purpose of this Book there is nothing strange in this, but rather a proof of divine inspiration so striking and so convincing that one can only wonder that it has not attracted more attention.

For one moment let us divest ourselves of all our knowledge of the subsequent history of Christ's Church. Let us forget our Western Europe, and put ourselves back in the position of a Jewish historian 1800 years ago, and suppose him uninspired. To *him*, with the Temple still standing, his nation still a territorial nation, to him the Holy Land, the soil of Asia, would be still the Land of Promise ; *there* would he

look for the Messiah's reign, and to *Asia* for His field of conquest. Not westward into Europe, but eastward, would all his interest, all his aspirations, go,—to the old home of Abraham, and across the great river, the river Euphrates, to the cradle of mankind, to the Eden of his holy Book, to the lost tribes of Israel in their dispersion, thither surely he must follow (most of all) the missionary work of Christ's Apostles : must follow St. Thomas to Parthia, St. Peter to Babylon, St. Bartholomew further still into the very heart of India<sup>1</sup>. Such naturally, necessarily, almost inevitably, would have been the scheme of history which a Jewish Christian of that first age would instinctively (if left to himself) have adopted. Asia would be to him everything ; Europe nothing.

Not so St. Luke. As if the history of the future of Christendom were all before him as an open scroll, as if to his inspired eye Asia and its fortunes were already fading, and the glory of Western Christendom already dawning on his vision, all those labours of the elder Apostles are passed over, Jerusalem itself forgotten, and he presses on with the youngest Apostle on his western career of missionary conquest, as if that were all in all. Surely we have here a convincing proof that the historian was powerfully overruled by One who knew the future of His Church ! And how thankful, how deeply thankful, may we be ! It is almost as though St. Luke had been writing expressly for us western people ; as if he had foreknown all, and for the sake of after ages had adopted our western point of view and made it his own ! Thus clearly do we see the guiding hand of Christ in these later chapters of the Acts. In the palm of that Hand

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. *Eccles. Hist.* i. 13 ; iii. 1 ; v. 10.



which led St. Paul westward from Antioch instead of eastward, were the destinies of modern Christendom, of Rome, of the great Anglo-Saxon Church, of the unborn Churches of the Pacific Ocean, and of a New World.

We have seen how Antioch became the centre and metropolis of a Hellenist Church. We have seen how its prophet-teachers were hurried, by what a modern might call the force of circumstances, into the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles. Before they were well aware of the immense consequences of what they were doing, the Christians of Antioch found themselves committed to a principle, of which none of Hebrew race had ever dreamed, that the Kingdom of Heaven was a world-wide kingdom, 'open to all believers.' But already the unseen Lord had in St. Peter's vision given His divine sanction to this principle. However 'marvellous in their eyes,' it was 'the Lord's doing.'

Boldly the Christians of Antioch went forward in the new career thus opened. Foremost among them were some Greek-speaking Jews of Cyprus. How wistfully would their eyes turn to their own island, lying as it did within sight of the seaport of Antioch. Among those blue hills seen from Seleucia they had friends and kinsmen. Were they not calling to them across the water?

Should they not send to them the glad tidings? They will wait upon the Lord to know His will. With fasting and solemn services of prayer they seek for guidance. And not in vain.

Clear and distinct came the answer of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of their prophets<sup>1</sup>. 'Yes,

<sup>1</sup> This is Chrysostom's explanation (5th *Hom. in Tim.*) He quotes the passage in illustration of St. Paul's allusion

separate me Barnabas and Saul for this work, whereunto I have called them !' How Barnabas, himself a Cypriote, would rejoice ! How Saul, his chosen friend, would think of his own old home and kinsfolk, who lay beyond, within easy reach from Cyprus ! And this then was what the vision in the Temple<sup>1</sup> had meant : 'Depart ! I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles !' At last the time was come. Again fasting and praying, the congregation met and ordained the two men with imposition of the hands of the whole Presbytery ; and the two Apostles (as they are now for the first time called)<sup>2</sup> set forth.

And with them, as their deacon, they took Barnabas (1 Tim. i. 18) to the similar prophesyings which accompanied Timothy's ordination. 'In those days,' he says, 'nothing was done without divine direction. By prophesying they chose their priests. And when I say *prophesying*, what do I mean ? I mean the Holy Ghost. For prophecy relates to present things as well as future. It was by prophecy that Saul was pointed out when lying hid among the vessels of the Church. For God thus makes known His will to His Saints. Those words then spoken were a prophecy :— "Separate me Paul and Barnabas," and so also was Timothy selected.'

Chrysostom's explanation is confirmed by St. Peter's expression in Acts i. 16. As the rejection of an Apostle is there ascribed to the Holy Ghost, speaking by the mouth of David, so here the selection of the two Apostles is ascribed to the Holy Ghost speaking by the mouth of His Antioch prophets.

That the Holy Ghost retains His personality when speaking by the mouth of man, is shown by our Lord's words (Mark xiii. 11) : 'It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost :' just as the evil spirit Legion retained his personality when speaking by the mouth of his victim. The prophecy, 'Separate me Barnabas and Paul,' was prefaced doubtless as that of Agabus was (xxi. 11) : 'Thus saith the Holy Ghost.' Compare also xx. 23, xxviii. 25, and xvi. 6, 7.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 17-21.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 4, 14.

nabas's near kinsman, John Mark, whom they had brought probably from Jerusalem.

It was a tour of one or two years ; and three times the special interposition of Christ, opening the door to the uncircumcised Gentiles, was most signally manifest. Christ's first great conquest over the Roman Empire, which His Gospel was now invading, was at Paphos, the capital of Cyprus, perhaps the most heathen of all heathen cities. A message and an invitation there reached the Apostles from the Roman Proconsul to attend his Court. Nothing like this had happened before. Sergius Paulus, a Roman of noble family, was a mere Roman philosopher. From curiosity he had listened to a Jewish impostor, Bar-jesus, the magician. Hearing that two Rabbis of the same race were visiting the island, he sends for them. Bar-jesus, fearing exposure, jealous of the new-comers, tries to prejudice the Governor against them. Then Paul comes to the front, and transfixing the false pretender with his inspired look, in the name of the Messiah whom he dared deny strikes him blind in the very presence of the Proconsul. Then turning to Sergius Paulus he preaches Jesus, and the Roman nobleman is numbered among the Lord's disciples. Such was Christ's first victory, and it was won by the younger Apostle, by Paul, and not by Barnabas. Paul henceforth takes precedence in the narrative ; and is called not by his Hebrew name, but by that other Roman name, which as a citizen of the Empire he had borne in his old home at Tarsus probably from childhood.

Forsaken by John Mark—why, we know not, one who had put his hand to the plough ought not thus to have turned back,—the two Apostles now passed

over to the mainland, and pushed onward to the Pisidian town of Antioch. To the synagogue on the Sabbath-day the Apostles repaired, according to their constant custom. And there St. Paul preached his first recorded sermon. No Bible student can fail to find in it the deepest interest. As he reads it, the thought of St. Stephen must be ever in his mind,—in every sentence he will be reminded of that inspired defence before the Sanhedrim. Truly the Martyr's mantle had fallen on his persecutor ! Nor can the thoughtful reader fail to discern in this first sermon the very germ of St. Paul's Epistles,—that one characteristic thought, which runs through St. Paul's Epistles, and is found in no other writer of the New Testament, the connection of Christ's *resurrection* with our *justification*,—that 'He rose again for our justification.'

The 'Jesus of Nazareth going about doing good, and healing all,' was St. Peter's chief thought. Not so St. Paul's. The Jesus he knew was the risen glorified Jesus only, who had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, and who that hour had saved him from his sins ; the Resurrection and the justifying power of that Resurrection was therefore emphatically the Gospel of St. Paul ;—what he knew by blessed experience, and what we too, we Gentiles of Europe, may equally know by experience, that we have a living Saviour behind the veil,—this was his glad tidings.

On this first Sabbath his discourse made a profound impression ; both Jews and Proselytes crowded round him, and followed him to his lodging, beseeching that they might hear the same words on the following Sabbath. But on the following Sabbath what a scene presented itself ! The synagogue was filled with

Gentiles, for among them too Paul and Barnabas had been labouring all through the week. The Jews were angrily offended ; all their pride and jealousy were excited. What part or lot in Israel's Messiah had these uncircumcised Gentiles ? So now, as ever, they turned round upon the Apostles, 'contradicting and blaspheming,' and expelled them from their synagogue. Bitter was the protest of the Apostles : 'Since ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles !' 'And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.' Thus a distinct Gentile Church was founded.

At Iconium the same thing happened. The Jews rejected the Gospel, the Gentiles embraced it. Thus wonderfully was Christ developing the Church of the future.

But a third manifestation was yet needed. Driven from Antioch and Iconium, the Apostles sought refuge among the half-civilized people of the hill-country of Lycaonia. Here was no synagogue of the Jews.


One Jewish family Paul found. The Jewess Eunice had married one of these Gentile mountaineers, and was living there with her good mother Lois, and her son, of whom we are to hear more hereafter. With them, doubtless, the Apostles lodged.

And here, among these rude tribes, equally as in the court of the Roman Governor of Cyprus, the Lord Jesus was with them. The miraculous healing of a paralytic man had so excited the superstitions of the crowd, that they would fain have worshipped and offered sacrifices to the Apostles, as though they were gods in human form ; and were only stayed by the indignant protest of St. Paul, when the meaning of their Lycaonian shout was explained to him. Angrily and moodily the crowd

retired. And when the Jews of Antioch and Iconium arrived in pursuit of the Apostles, they found no difficulty in turning the fickle people against them; calumniating them doubtless, as their nation had calumniated the Lord Himself, ascribing His mighty works to the powers of darkness. With that rapid revulsion of feeling and of passion, which our missionaries know so well among the heathen, they set upon them, and stoned Paul on the spot; dragging him, bruised and stunned, outside the city walls, and leaving him to die.

But not so would the Lord forsake His servant. When the crowd dispersed and the converts gathered round him, he rose and was able to walk into the city, and go forward the next day on his journey with Barnabas. His resting place was Derbe. His Jewish enemies, thinking him dead, had abandoned their pursuit. At Derbe he made many disciples, and stayed long enough to regain his strength, and allow time for the persecution to subside. He was now not far from the mountain passes which led down into Cilicia and to his native Tarsus. But 'the care of the Churches which he had founded forbade him to seek rest.' He and Barnabas must return, and in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirm the souls of their converts, and strengthen them to bear those tribulations through which 'we must enter the Kingdom of God.' Moreover, these infant Churches needed organization. We read how the two Apostles appointed Presbyters for each Congregation; and then with fasting and prayer 'commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed.'

Returning by sea to the Syrian Antioch, the headquarters now of the Gentile Church, they related all that they had done, and how God had worked with them, and had opened to the Gentiles a door of faith.



## CHAPTER XI

### The Jerusalem Council

THESE facts related by the two Apostles on their return, spoke to the conscience of the Antioch Church more eloquently than any argument. Not human wisdom, but the finger of God had broken down for ever the barrier between Jew and Gentile. The Gospel of Christ had invaded the Roman Empire, and had there won victories such as the Jerusalem Church could not parallel. But ere the Gospel could pursue further its majestic march towards Rome, a vital question must needs be determined. Hitherto the word Church had been used in the singular number only,—it is so in all the earlier chapters of the Acts<sup>1</sup>: the Church of the elder Apostles whose centre was Jerusalem.

Now, as we enter on St. Paul's labours, and in all the succeeding chapters, we have the word in the plural number, 'the Churches of Christ.' Did Christ mean His Church to be one or many? And if *one*, as His words on earth ever implied, then *one* in what sense? *One* as having one *earthly* centre? Or one as having one heavenly centre? A vital question. And here, divesting ourselves of all that the centuries have taught us, can we wonder that many clung to the

<sup>1</sup> It is not until the first missionary journey of St. Paul that the plural is used. All the best MSS. have the singular in Acts ix. 31.

inotion of an earthly centre? Can we wonder that those who from childhood had looked upon Mount Zion as the Messiah's destined throne, to which the redeemed from every land were to come with songs<sup>1</sup>, the joy of the whole earth<sup>2</sup>,—still clung to the idea that *this* was meant to be the Church's centre?—that it was by incorporation with God's Israel that the Gentiles were to be saved? True, at Cæsarea, and at Antioch, and now in the cities of Asia Minor, a door had been opened to the Gentiles; but surely these distant congregations were all to subordinate themselves, affiliate themselves, to the Mother Church which Christ Himself had founded, else the unity of Christ's Church would be broken.

We can hardly wonder that numbers of the original Hebrew Christians, drawn largely as they were from the ranks of the Pharisees, thus reasoned. Had St. Paul made this sufficiently plain to his converts, they asked with some jealousy? A door of faith had been opened to them, *that* they could not deny; to have refused them admission to Baptism would have been to fight against God's Providence. But being thus admitted they must be circumcised, and conform to the law of God's ancient people. Had not Christ Himself said, He came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law?

So reasoned the Christian Pharisees who came down from Jerusalem to Antioch soon after the return of Paul and Barnabas. And what was Paul's answer? Such was *not* the Gospel he had preached. He did not consider himself the Apostle of the Jerusalem Church. He was the Apostle of Christ in Heaven. Therefore, like St. Stephen before him, he had

<sup>1</sup> Isa. li. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xlviii. 2.



proclaimed that not this place, nor that place, but Heaven was God's throne, and earth His footstool ; that Christ's Church needed no earthly temple for her centre ; that her centre was in Heaven ; that while she held fast by her Divine Head she was essentially *one*, and needed no other unity. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, but many earthly tabernacles :—one flock under one Shepherd, but many folds<sup>1</sup>.

Such was St. Paul's doctrine ; and such too was the belief of the Christians at Antioch. Their Church had not been founded by any of the Apostles. They felt themselves to be entirely independent of the Hebrew Church at Jerusalem ;—bound to them by their common faith, by the closest bonds of love,—as their contributions during the famine showed,—but standing to them in the relation of an independent equality. Therefore it had never occurred to them to oblige their Gentile members to conform to the Mosaic Law, or to observe the hours and days of Jewish worship, as the Church at Jerusalem continued to do.

But this peace and harmony at Antioch was destined to be disturbed by a fierce and bitter controversy ; a controversy which for years to come was to divide the Church of Christ into two hostile camps ; a controversy which infused an element of bitterness into nearly all the Epistles of St. Paul ; a controversy which was only ended by the downfall of Jerusalem. So untrue is it that the days of primitive Christianity were days of peace and unity, and that only in these latter days has the Church been divided !

<sup>1</sup> The reader need hardly be reminded that in John x. 16, 'one fold' is a mistranslation. It should be 'one flock.'

We are now to trace the first beginning of the schism.

In these days of captious criticism—delighting to lower what is sacred—there have not been wanting commentators who would fain persuade us that this schism divided even the Apostles themselves,—that on one side there were ranged Paul and Barnabas, and on the other James and the Apostles of the circumcision. How entirely untrue this is will best appear from a careful examination of St. Luke's narrative, with the help of the side-light which St. Paul's account of the same events in the 2d chapter of Galatians casts upon it.

'Certain men,' St. Luke tells us, 'came down from Judea' to Antioch, and began to teach the brethren that except they were circumcised after the manner of Moses they could not be saved.

Who were these men? Had they been sent by the Apostles at Jerusalem? No; the Apostles themselves soon after speak of them as 'men to whom we gave no such commandment'<sup>1</sup>. St. Paul does not scruple to call them 'false brethren'<sup>2</sup>. And St. Luke is careful to explain how they came by their rigid notions: they were of the sect of the Pharisees, he tells us (xv. 5), who in embracing Christianity had not laid aside their Pharisaism.

Such were the men who came to Antioch, troubling the peace of the Church with their false teaching. The 'dissension and disputation' which thus arose led the Antioch Christians into much perplexity.

A 'revelation,' vouchsafed either to St. Paul or to the prophets of the congregation (Gal. ii. 2), determined them to lay the matter before the Apostles and

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 4.

Presbyters of Jerusalem. A deputation was appointed, Paul and Barnabas being the leading members, and Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile convert, among their companions. The Church set them on the way, so commending them after their manner to the grace of God. They travelled by the coast road through Phœnicia and Samaria, publishing as they went the glad tidings of the extension of the Church in Asia Minor.

At Jerusalem the whole Church assembled to receive them, and listened with attention to their account how God had blessed their missionary efforts among the Gentiles. The Pharisaic party protested that the new converts ought to be circumcised ; this raised the whole question. The Apostles and Presbyters of Jerusalem did not take upon themselves to decide the question authoritatively, but convened a meeting<sup>1</sup> 'to consider of this matter.' Peter was the first to speak. He reminded them how manifestly, some ten years before, God's blessing had rested on the conversion of the uncircumcised Gentile Cornelius and his household, how God had sealed it with the Holy Ghost, showing that they must not regard as unclean those whom faith in Christ had cleansed. Therefore if they began now to require of Gentiles a fulfilment of that law which neither they nor their fathers had ever been able to fulfil, it was simply a tempting of God, and a mistrust of the free

<sup>1</sup> That this Council included the laity is clear ; for though according to the best MSS. the decree ran in the name of the Apostles and Presbyters only, yet the whole multitude is spoken of in the 12th verse, and in the 22d the whole Church is mentioned as taking part in the consultation with the Apostles and Presbyters.

grace of Christ, which alone could save either Jew or Gentile.

Thus St. Peter gave his opinion clearly against the Pharisees, and in favour of the Gentile party. Next, amid general silence, Paul and Barnabas gave an account of their mission, laying stress on the miracles which the Lord had enabled them to work—a clear proof that the Holy Ghost had been with them. The blinding of Elymas, the signs and wonders at Iconium, the cure of the paralytic at Lystra, were doubtless cited as proofs of the divine approval. It remained for the president to sum up. James the Just declared his agreement with Peter, appealing to the prophet Amos, whose words showed that the promised restoration of the Tabernacle of David found its true fulfilment in this conversion of the Gentiles. Wherefore it ought to be freely accepted as the predestined purpose of God ; and the Gentiles ought not to be troubled with any Jewish obligations, except such as were plainly essential, as safeguards against idolatry and its accompanying licentiousness. For such elementary restrictions the teaching of the Synagogues of the Dispersion had abundantly prepared the Gentile world<sup>1</sup> ; and without them the Jewish and Gentile Christians could not have taken their meals in common.

From the Epistle to the Galatians it would appear that this public conference had been preceded by private interviews between St. Paul and the three leading Apostles of Jerusalem, in which the latter pledged themselves to a friendly partition of labour,—that Peter, James, and John should henceforth address themselves to the Israelites, and Paul and Barnabas to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, chap. i. p. 138.

the Gentiles,—with one reservation, to which St. Paul cordially agreed,—that the Gentiles should still be exhorted to minister to the wants of the Jerusalem Church.

Hence the perfect harmony and unanimity of *all* the Apostles in the public conference. The decree ran in the name of the Apostles and Presbyters, brethren<sup>1</sup>, to their Gentile brethren of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia : strongly commending to them their beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who had hazarded their lives for Christ ; and in the name of the Holy Ghost decreeing that no Jewish obligation need rest upon them, save only to abstain from the feasts and licentiousness of the Heathen temples.

How needful it was thus to assert the perfect accord of the elder Apostles with Paul and Barnabas appears only too plainly from the Epistles of St. Paul, in which he is ever alluding to the wicked attempts of the Judaizers to represent them as heads of opposite factions.

The fact that the decree is addressed to the Churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia by name, seems to show that it was drawn up to meet a special difficulty affecting special Churches, and was not meant to be of universal obligation. With this agrees the fact that St. Paul in writing to other Churches never alludes to it ; and further, in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. x. 27) and in that to the Romans (xiv. 2), he speaks of one of its rules (about eating things offered to idols) as an open question, to be answered by each man's conscience on principles of evangelical expediency.

<sup>1</sup> The best mss. read 'the Apostles and Presbyters, brethren.'

Two men gifted with prophecy belonging to the Hebrew Church were chosen by the whole body of Jerusalem Christians to return with the Antioch deputation to enforce the purport of the decree by word of mouth. One of them, Silas, became St. Paul's companion on his second journey. Of the other, Judas Barsabas, we hear no more.

But before the Apostle set forth on that great mission which brought the Gospel into Europe, two painful scenes were witnessed at Antioch, one of which belongs properly to this chapter.

St. Peter appears to have repaired to Antioch soon after the Council. On arriving there, St. Paul tells us, in his Epistle to the Galatians, he lived on friendly terms with the Gentile converts. But on the arrival of certain men from James, the head of the Jerusalem Church,—men, it would appear, who retained their old Jewish prejudices,—Peter, afraid of giving them offence, withdrew from the society of the Gentiles, and would eat with them no longer. Others, too, even Barnabas, followed his example. St. Paul saw at once that this was undoing all the good effected by the decree of the Council; and therefore publicly expostulated with Peter, censuring his conduct strongly. 'When I saw,' he writes to the Galatians, 'that they were diverging from the straight path of the Gospel truth, I said to Peter before all, If you, born and bred a Jew, discard Jewish customs, how unreasonable to impose them on Gentiles<sup>1</sup>!'

What the effect on St. Peter was we are not told; enough for us to know that afterwards in his Epistle we find St. Peter speaking of him who had thus reproved him as 'our beloved brother Paul;' and of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 14.

‘ the wisdom given unto him ;’ enough to know that if for the moment they were divided, yet in their deaths they were not divided, that, side by side on the Ostian way according to some, certainly in the same great Neronian persecution, they suffered for the sake of their dear Lord. God’s grace may not save His saints from falling, but most surely they will fall to rise again the stronger. So it was with St. Peter and St. Paul.

And such, too, as we shall see in the next chapter, was the result of the *second* painful difference between God’s saints at Antioch.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Christ leading His Apostle into Europe*

**H**OW often, in studying the biography of God's saints, may we perceive that what at the moment seemed a check and disappointment in their career, was really the clearing away of what would have proved a hindrance !

Bitterly at the time may St. Paul have regretted that, just when he seemed most to need the sympathy and help of his old friend Barnabas, his companionship was denied him ! But would Barnabas have proved a really wise and helpful associate in the mission to the far West on which the Apostle of the Gentiles was now entering ? If Paul had put Jehu's question<sup>1</sup> to him, 'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart' in this matter ? could his friend have honestly given him his hand, and said, 'It is' ? Have we not seen that in the dispute with the Judaizers Barnabas had been 'carried away with their dissimulation' ? Whether this was from narrowness of view or from want of moral courage, clearly his companionship would have embarrassed Paul in the organization of the Gentile Churches. And thus again and again, in the history of Christ's Church, evil has been overruled for good. But in itself the difference which parted them was evil. It thus arose : Barnabas wished again to take as their travelling com-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings x. 15.



panion his cousin, John Mark. Paul disapproved. He had deserted them on their former tour. 'The contention was so sharp between the two Apostles that they departed asunder one from the other.' Barnabas with Mark sailed to visit the Churches of his native Cyprus. Paul chose as his companion the prophet Silas<sup>1</sup>. And so they parted. Six years afterwards, writing to the Corinthians<sup>2</sup>, St. Paul mentions Barnabas as an example of Christian self-denial. Eleven years afterwards this same John Mark was Paul's fellow-labourer and comforter in his captivity at Rome<sup>3</sup>. If they parted in bitterness for a season, it was to come together again in joy.

On this second most eventful journey of the Apostle we now enter. Little did he and Silas know when they set forth whither the guiding hand of Christ would lead them. The intention of the Apostle was simply to go again and visit the Churches he had founded, and see how they fared. Amid the prayers and blessings of the Antioch Christians—commended by the brethren to the grace of God—he set forth with his chosen companion by the great Roman road across the plain of Cilicia, pausing doubtless in his old home at Tarsus, and so through the narrow defile and over the passes of Mount Taurus into the high plain of Derbe and Lystra.

At Lystra the temple of Jupiter outside the city gate would remind him of his former visit; to Silas he might point out the spot whither they had dragged his bruised body. Another companion he would now

<sup>1</sup> From the narrative of the imprisonment at Philippi, it has been inferred by Dean Howson that Silas was a Roman citizen like St. Paul.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Philem. 24; Col. iv. 10.

‘have to go forth with him.’ The youthful Timothy seems to have won the heart and love of the Apostle. His mother was a Jewess, but his father a Gentile, and Timothy uncircumcised. At first it may seem strange that Paul should circumcise him when he had so resolutely refused to circumcise Titus ; and yet on second thoughts it is full of instruction.

What St. Paul had contended for at Antioch and in the Jerusalem Council was, that circumcision was a thing in itself indifferent, and in things indifferent expediency is the highest principle. Therefore to the Gentiles of Antioch he became as a Gentile, refusing to circumcise Titus, that he might gain the Gentiles ; to the Jews of Asia Minor he became as a Jew, circumcising Timothy that he might so win admission for him into their synagogues<sup>1</sup>.

Whether Timothy was ordained now or later we cannot be sure. If now, then the hands laid upon him were the hands of those Presbyters whom Paul had ordained before in Lystra and Iconium, and the prophecies accompanying his ordination, of which the Apostle also reminds him in his last letter, may have been some utterances of the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the prophet Silas promising a blessing on his ministry.

Leaving Lycaonia the three Christian missionaries seem to have followed the Roman military road, still used by the Turkish caravans, through Phrygia and the Roman province of Galatia, where they were received ‘as angels of God’ by that fickle Celtic race. Detained by sickness<sup>2</sup>, possibly in Ancyra, their

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 20.

<sup>2</sup> ‘By reason of my bodily sickness’ is the correct translation of Gal. iv. 13.

capital, Paul preached Christ to them. There was nothing they would not do for him. They would have 'plucked out their eyes and given them' to him. From Galatia they journeyed on towards the Ægean Sea. From the high chalk downs of Mysia they saw the populous plain of the Asian province on their left, with its seven great cities destined one day to be known as the Seven Churches ; should they descend into those cities, and there preach their Gospel ? No ! they were mysteriously hindered by the unseen hand that was guiding them. Should they turn to the right, then, into Bithynia ? They essayed to do so, but the Spirit of Jesus<sup>1</sup> suffered them not. Through the gift of prophetic utterance with which Silas was endowed<sup>2</sup>, possibly, or perhaps by a vision vouchsafed to Paul, as in the sequel, it was made plain to them that such was not Christ's will. One course, and one course only, Christ left open to them, and that was *forward* : forward to the beach of that narrow strait which divides the world of Asia from the world of Europe.

What could this guiding hand intend ? Were these three servants of Christ really to cross over and proclaim His holy Name to the Greeks of Europe ? Christ left them not in doubt. Resting by the shore, in the visions of the night Paul saw a man of Macedonia praying him and saying, 'Come over into Macedonia and help us !'

And St. Luke continues, 'And after Paul had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them.' We must note the change of pronoun ; 'they' no longer,

<sup>1</sup> Such is the reading of all the oldest mss. in Acts xvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 32.

but 'we : ' 'we endeavoured.' St. Luke himself therefore had here joined them<sup>1</sup>.

It has been suggested<sup>2</sup> that the physician Luke may have joined St. Paul because of his recent sickness. How faithfully he attended him in all his future journeyings and captivities (with one brief interval) we know from the Epistles. At Troas they found a ship, and with a favouring wind<sup>3</sup> set sail for the coast of Europe.

The narrative henceforth has all the vividness and circumstantiality of, what in fact it is, a traveller's journal. And yet it is to us *the Word of God*. 'What makes it this to me ?' is a question that every reader should ask himself. And the more carefully we read the more clearly will come forth the answer :—This writer, whose pages we are turning over, writes invariably as one who is conscious that underneath the daily occurrences which he is so simply and plainly recording in his journal, *there lies an ever-growing purpose*; and as one, moreover, who was enabled to discern, in what to another would have seemed the mere chances of travel, the clear directions of a personal Providence—of Christ behind the veil. Our familiarity from childhood with these inspired narratives has in some measure educated us to have the same discernment ; but we must not forget that in St. Luke it was a new thing, a lesson he had never learned in his youth, a gift given him at a certain date in his life which he could well remember, an *inspiration*.

<sup>1</sup> This is pointed out by Irenæus (iii. 14. 1).

<sup>2</sup> By Wieseler.

<sup>3</sup> This is implied in the Greek word, 'they ran before the wind,' and explains how they accomplished the distance from Troas to Philippi in two days ; in Acts xx. 6 we read that it took five days.

If in reading his journal we note well what he omits, and what he tells, and his manner of telling it, we shall learn the lesson which God intends us to learn, how to discern His Providence in the daily occurrences of life.

We must observe then carefully these phrases, 'they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost,' 'they assayed to go, but were not suffered,' 'they assuredly gathered that the Lord called them.' Even the favourable wind to the shores of Europe, in contrast to the previous checks, is to be noticed.

The great 'Egnatian way' along which they were now travelling, teeming with Roman troops and Roman merchandise ; the new sights and sounds that now met them, all bespeaking greater nearness to Rome ; the historical associations of Philippi, whose elder citizens had heard their fathers speak of the famous battle which had established the Empire ; the city itself in constitution a miniature of Rome<sup>1</sup>, ruled by its *Duumvirs* or *Prætors* ; Latin, not Greek, their official language ;—all this, so sure to have found place in a modern journal, is omitted by St. Luke.

But we have most carefully recorded the *Proseucha* or Jewish oratory, by the river-side outside the city walls ; how St. Paul there spoke of the Messiah ; how it pleased the Messiah to 'open the heart' of one of his listeners, so that 'she attended to the things which were spoken,'—her conversion ascribed, we observe, not to Paul, but directly to Christ ; how she was baptized with all her household, and in her gratitude humbly pressed her teachers to make her house their home ; how the second convert of Europe was also a woman, of far humbler rank, a poor slave girl, a vagrant

<sup>1</sup> All military colonies were modelled after Rome.

fortune-teller of the market-place, whose crazed utterances were nevertheless so overruled as to testify to the divine mission of the Christian strangers ; how He whose word brought peace to the Gadarene demoniac, brought peace, too, to this poor Thracian ; how her enraged masters dragged Paul and Silas before the Prætors, and how the Prætors, ignorant of their citizenship, bade the lictors strip and scourge them, and then thrust them, all bleeding as they were, into the cold damp underground cell of the dungeon ; how at midnight, as they prayed and sang praises unto God, their fellow-prisoners listening, 'the Lord looked down from His sanctuary, out of Heaven did the Lord behold the earth, that He might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity, and deliver the children appointed unto death ;' how 'when they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, He delivered them out of their distress ; for He brought them out of darkness, and out of the shadow of death, and brake their bonds asunder ;' how, ere their prayer was ended, the answer came in the earthquake, and the prison walls rocked, and the gates swung open, and the staples of the prisoners' chains fell from the walls ; and the effect of this on the Roman gaoler, calling for a light, and leaping down into the cell, trembling and falling on his knees before Paul and Silas, asking as he led them out, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?'—so entirely did he feel that he was in the power of that unknown God who could thus hear and answer prayer ; and their reply, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,'—saved not from the earthquake only, but saved from that impending wrath to come, of which the whole Roman Empire at this time seems to have

been dimly conscious:—all this is told, most vividly told, by St. Luke, and it is God's word to us, enabling us to see His unseen hand in all that befalls us, in what we call the ordinary occurrences of our life.

For it behoves us to note that there was nothing in all this *extraordinary*. Men's journeyings are still controlled by unforeseen hindrances, our course is still shaped by circumstances, the words of the preacher still reach the heart, deep impressions are still made, it may be by the word spoken, it may be by the storm or earthquake ; Christ is *now* as certainly as *then*, through all these things, directing and overruling the career of His servants and His Church on earth.

To open our eyes thus to read the vision of our lives and of the times in which we live, is surely the divine purpose of this narrative.

## CHAPTER XIII

### St. Paul in Greece—Antichrist and the Restrainer

**A** LONG the great Roman road that led through the Macedonian cities, the unseen hand of Christ was now drawing the Gospel further and further away from what we call the Bible lands, nearer to the centre of the then civilized world, nearer to Rome, nearer therefore to the great stream of the world's history, with which in a few generations it was to mingle, with consequences which God alone foreknew.

From Philippi—demanding an apology from the Prætors for the violence they had done them, which they readily accorded when they found that they were Roman citizens,—Paul and Silas, with their young companion, journeyed on—a hundred miles or more—to Thessalonica, there to find that their worst enemies were by no means the civil magistrates, but their own countrymen. Three weeks only had they been in the place when the Jews, gathering a company 'of the baser sort,' 'set all the city on an uproar,' and assaulting the house where Paul and Silas lodged, dragged their host Jason before the magistrates<sup>1</sup>, who

<sup>1</sup> Thessalonica, being a 'free city,' and not a 'colony,' retained its native magistracy. St. Luke as usual shows his minute accuracy, calling them *Politarchs*. See Appendix, p. 153.



took bail of Jason, and so allayed the tumult. Not content, the baffled Jews pursued the Apostle to Berea, and stirring up the people there against him drove him onward into Greece.

Thus was St. Paul's route overruled and changed ; not onward now to Rome,—that must be postponed ; the recent tumults in the capital, which had just led Claudius to expel the Jews, made this no fitting time for St. Paul's mission *there* ;—he is turned aside therefore, and finds himself at Athens, confronted with the world's keenest intellects in the heart of Greece.

A crowd of thoughts rush into the mind at the mention of Athens ; sacred and profane history seem to be brought into such startling contact. But to indulge such thoughts would contribute nothing to the right understanding of the simple narrative before us. Nor was the Athens, which St. Paul visited, the Athens of our Greek History. Greece, or rather Achaia, to give it the name it now bore, was a mere province of the Roman Empire ; Corinth its capital ; Athens frequented only for the sake of its schools of philosophy. Rome sent her youths to study at Athens as we send ours to Oxford or Cambridge. But politically the city was of no importance ; and St. Paul's brief sojourn there, though full of vivid interest, is but an episode, as it were, in what may be called his spiritual invasion of the Roman Empire.

As he traversed the streets of Athens his eager spirit was stirred within him by the Pagan sights that met his eye on every side. No city of the Empire was so crowded with statuary. The Greek religion, gratifying a highly cultivated taste by its sculpture, and feeding the national love of excitement

by its pageantry, was altogether unconnected with morality; and St. Paul was simply shocked by it. In the market-place, where the Athenians resorted daily to hear the news and enjoy their unrivalled climate, the Apostle spoke earnestly, and was soon surrounded by the students eager to hear what the Eastern stranger had to say. Catching from his mouth the often repeated words 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection,' they thought these were new divinities that he was trying to introduce. And though many laughed there was a real curiosity to hear him; and that they might do so the more conveniently they adjourned from the market to the adjoining amphitheatre of stone seats, where the court of Areopagus used to hold its sittings in the open air. We must not suppose that the court was now sitting, though some of the Areopagites were among the listeners. St. Paul's speech was followed by no sentence, nor is it like the defence of one upon his trial. He had been asked to give a public address, and he does so with a skill and with an eloquence which have excited the admiration of our greatest orators. Doubtless what St. Luke gives us is but a brief abstract, but every word suggests the power of the original. He begins with his characteristic courtesy<sup>1</sup>, seeking some common ground with his hearers, whereon he may build up his great argument. It is difficult to say which is most admirable, the persuasiveness with which he speaks, or the courage with which he sets before them the falseness of their creature-worship, of their idolatry, of their

<sup>1</sup> The reader need hardly be reminded that the word rendered 'too superstitious' ought to be translated 'scrupulously religious,' being said *in praise*, as Chrysostom long ago pointed out, citing it in illustration of St. Paul's own precept in Col. iv. 5, 6.—*Hom. xi. in Coloss.*

proud exclusiveness, and the certainty of a coming judgment.

While Paul spoke of natural theology, and even of a future judgment, they listened ; but when he approached the distinctive doctrine of the Gospel,—that this future Judge would be One whom God had recently raised from the dead, they interrupted him, and did not care to listen longer ;—it was foolishness to them. Some mocked, while others more civilly said they would listen to the rest of what he had to say some other time. A few, a very few, ‘clave to him,’ and sought to hear more. But for the rest, the whole tone and temper of the Athenians, intellectual as they were, was too childish to understand the earnestness of the inspired Hebrew man ; and St. Paul went on to Corinth. And here in the Romanized<sup>1</sup> capital of Greece for a full year and a half he made his home.

The period of six years on which we are now entering was perhaps the season of St. Paul’s greatest spiritual and intellectual exertion. Excepting only the hurried visit to the Holy Land in A.D. 54, he spent these years among the Greeks, Corinth and Ephesus being his headquarters. To this period belong his six greatest Epistles, the two to the Thessalonians, the two to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, and, greatest of all, that to the Romans. In all of them there breathes a consciousness of the grandeur of the work before him, a conviction that *here* emphatically—westward not eastward—lay the

<sup>1</sup> The old Greek Corinth had been shamefully destroyed by Mummius two hundred years before. C. Julius Cæsar had refounded and rebuilt it ; and it was in St. Paul’s time altogether Roman.

field of labour to which the Lord had called him.

The side-light which these Epistles throw upon the narrative of the Acts is invaluable.

It is indeed a privilege to be permitted at this crisis of St. Paul's life thus to look into his very mind, and see what thoughts most occupied him on finding himself for the first time in these great cities of the Roman Empire. His two letters to the Thessalonians were written in the early weeks of his sojourn at Corinth.

We open them, and what do we find? In the midst of very great depression of spirits, we find his thoughts ever recurring to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus; and, as connected with it, he seems to be thinking of the destiny of this great Roman Empire, so powerful in its perfect organization for good or evil; and there is a third thought,—he seems to have now felt, more intensely than at any other period of his life, the fearful wickedness—the mystery of iniquity—of the Jews. Never in any other of his writings do we meet with such an outburst of anger against the Jews as that in the first Epistle:—men ‘who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, hateful to God, enemies of mankind, doing all they could to hinder the salvation of the Gentiles, filling up the measure of their own sins, bringing down upon themselves the wrath of God to the very uttermost.’

Of these things, and especially of the Second Advent, he seems to have spoken freely at Thessalonica; ‘Remember ye not,’ he writes in his second letter, ‘that when I was yet with you, I told you these things.’ This explains, what might else have perplexed us in

St. Luke's narrative, the charge the Jews there brought against him. They seem to have taken advantage of what he had said of the royal state of the Messiah's return, and twisted it into treason against the Emperor. For when the magistrates asked what the disturbance meant, the mob replied that Paul and Silas were doing 'contrary to the decrees of Cæsar,' and were for setting up 'another King, one Jesus.'

Warned by such misrepresentations of the danger of speaking freely of these subjects, he is careful in his Epistle to veil his reference to them in that enigmatical form which has so perplexed commentators.

That the revelations vouchsafed to St. Paul at this period are to have a further fulfilment in the latter days we cannot doubt ; but that they were in the first instance suggested, and to some extent fulfilled, by the circumstances under which he was then living must be clear to any one who realizes those circumstances,

For mark his words :—

He speaks of a 'mystery of iniquity,' already working ; and he speaks of a restraining power which was then (while he wrote) hindering the full consummation of that great impiety.

Now remembering how the Jews of late had been manifesting their ever increasing hostility to Christ's Kingdom, pursuing the Apostle from city to city, inflaming the populace against him,—first at Thessalonica, then at Berea, and now at Corinth 'opposing and blaspheming' so malignantly that he shook his raiment, saying 'Your blood be upon your own heads ;' remembering all this, we can hardly fail to perceive that *this* was the mystery of iniquity which the Apostle saw even

now developing itself, to culminate ere long in some yet deadlier form of Antichrist in Jerusalem itself.

And meantime what would St. Paul most naturally understand by the *restraining power* of his visions?

Surely his recent experience would leave him in no doubt. Though he could not fail to see how rapidly the government of the Roman Empire was degenerating, still, again and again, he owed to it his safety. At Philippi his appeal to his Roman citizenship had been respected. At Thessalonica the forms of law had held the Jews in check. Now at Corinth, when they dragged him before the Proconsul, they were denied even a hearing, and expelled ignominiously from the Court. The conduct of the mob, falling on the Jewish Elder, and with their blows helping the lictors to eject him, shows how entirely they shared Gallio's contempt for Jewish fanaticism<sup>1</sup>.

Fresh from such scenes as these, we cannot wonder that St. Paul saw in these outbreaks of Jewish rancour a foreshadowing of the Antichrist, and in the Roman Government that 'restraining power,' which hindered as yet its full development. Christ had assured him it should be so—in this very city of Corinth soon after his arrival, in the visions of the night, *He* had appeared to him, and promised that the malice of his persecutors should be thus restrained—'Be not afraid,' He said, 'but speak and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.'

<sup>1</sup> Gallio is described by his brother Seneca as one of the most amiable and good-natured of men. St. Paul's habitual deference to those in authority would contrast favourably in his eyes with the turbulence of the Jews. See Appendix, p. 153.

As in the Temple at Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> fourteen years before, so now in his lodging at Corinth, the Lord Jesus is with His servant. But we must mark well the contrast of his words : in the Temple, 'Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me ;' now at Corinth, 'Speak and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city.'

How wonderfully, how mysteriously, was Christ fulfilling His purposes ! As the darkness of the approaching doom seemed more and more to gather over the land of his forefathers, how clearly must St. Paul have seen that the horizon westward was ever more and more opening into light !

Overpowering at times must have been the thought that he, a poor earthen vessel, was charged with this ministration of Glory : but no less inspiring that Voice behind the Veil in these great cities of the Roman Empire, 'Be not afraid, for I am with thee.'

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 18.

## CHAPTER XIV

### Organization of the Greek Churches

LET us endeavour in this chapter to glean all that we can about the organization of those Greek Churches founded by St. Paul. In the case of Ephesus we may trace the growth of the Christian congregation very clearly by the help of St. Luke's narrative.

Leaving Corinth in the spring of A.D. 54, with Aquila and Priscilla, St. Paul had paid a hurried visit to Ephesus, and had spoken with such effect in the Jewish synagogue that they pressed him to stay among them. But this he could not then do. Anxious to keep the approaching feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem—possibly in connection with his vow at Cenchrea<sup>1</sup>, he bade them farewell, promising that if God permitted he would soon return to them. Accordingly,

<sup>1</sup> The subject of St. Paul's vow (for that it was St. Paul's and not Aquila's, is now generally agreed) is full of difficulty. Modern commentators have added little to what Horne wrote half a century ago :—

'Similar to the Nazarite vow was the vow frequently made by devout Jews on their recovery from sickness, or deliverance from danger or distress ; who, for thirty days before they offered sacrifices, abstained from wine and shaved the hair of their head. This usage illustrates the conduct of Paul as related in Acts xviii. 18. The Apostle, in consequence of a providential deliverance from some imminent peril, not recorded by the sacred writer, bound himself by a vow which the law in this case required him to pay at Jerusalem. In consequence of this transaction Luke relates that he shaved his head' [*shaved* is the word in xxi. 24, but not here. Paul did not *shave*, but *cut short* his hair,] 'at



after keeping the feast at Jerusalem, and spending a few weeks at Antioch, he returned to Ephesus, and found that during his three or four months' absence a good beginning had been made. His friends Aquila and Priscilla, whom he had left at Ephesus, had not been idle. In their weekly attendance at the synagogue they had been charmed and attracted, like many others, by the fervid eloquence of a Rabbi, named Apollos, who had lately arrived from Alexandria. Years ago, when 'Jerusalem and all Judea' were going forth into the wilderness to listen to the Baptist's proclamation that the Messiah, who should 'baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost,' might be recognised in Jesus of Nazareth, Apollos seems to have been of the number; but of the subsequent events of Christ's ministry and death, and resurrection, he seems to have known but little, except such hearsay as had reached Alexandria;

Cenchrea. Paul in his intended journey afterwards to Judea, says, *he must needs go to Jerusalem*, for the laws respecting the Nazarite's vow required the person who had entered into this engagement, if he were in a foreign country when he first laid himself under this solemn obligation, to go up to Jerusalem to accomplish it. Here several appointed sacrifices were offered, and a certain course of purifications and religious observances was prescribed and performed. This appears from another passage in the same sacred writer (Acts xxi. 23-27). Josephus (*Wars*, ii. 15. 1) presents us with an instance parallel to this of Paul, in the person of Bernice, who went to Jerusalem, in order to perform a vow which she had made to God.—Horne's *Introd. to the Study of Scripture*.

*N.B.*—The words about the Feast in xviii. 21. are absent from the oldest MSS., but they are found in the Cambridge MS. and in the Syriac version, and are retained by Alford, who gives Wieseler's reasons for supposing the Feast was Pentecost. It could not be the Passover, for navigation was not considered safe until the vernal equinox (Livy, xxxvii. 9), nor Tabernacles, for his voyage to Athens a year and a half before must then have been in mid-winter.

nor had he ever heard whether the promised outpouring of the Holy Ghost had been as yet fulfilled. Him Aquila and Priscilla invited to their house, where a small knot of Christians seem to have already gathered, and 'expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly,' and sent him onwards into Achaia, there to water the Churches which St. Paul had planted. Twelve disciples of this Apollos St. Paul found at Ephesus on his return. To them he explained, as Aquila and his wife had explained to Apollos, the fuller doctrine of Christian baptism, and by laying on of hands imparted to them the gifts of that Holy Spirit of whose effusion they had not previously heard.

Thus a church was founded. For we must observe carefully that what Aquila and Priscilla and their friends had done was only by way of preparation. No Church could properly be founded until the arrival of an Apostle. None but an Apostle could by laying on of hands impart those spiritual gifts which were essential to the organization of a Church<sup>1</sup>.

These twelve men, prophesying and speaking with tongues, were the first ordained of those Ephesian Presbyters whom three years afterwards Paul gathered round him at Miletus. The appointment and ordination of Christian Presbyters, as distinct from the Jewish Presbyters, would be the first and immediate consequence of St. Paul's open secession from the Jewish synagogue. St. Paul's first effort here, as elsewhere, was to bring over the whole Synagogue bodily to embrace Christianity. At Berea he seems to have succeeded in this; and there doubtless the existing Presbyters of the synagogue would be the Presbyters

<sup>1</sup> That the spiritual gifts determined the choice of church-officers, is implied in 1 Cor. xii. 28-31.

of the Christian Church. But in most cases, as at Corinth and here at Ephesus, secession became necessary, and then separate Presbyters would have to be appointed. For three months St. Paul had laboured in the Ephesian synagogue, arguing and endeavouring to persuade them to enrol themselves in the Messiah's Kingdom. 'But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and *separated the disciples*,' adjourning to the lecture-hall of one of the wealthier converts, and there organized his Christian Church. Of its constitution St. Luke's brief narrative tells us nothing further, beyond the one fact that they assembled themselves together, not once a week only, but *daily*.

We long to hear more of the habits and customs of these Greek Churches of St. Paul's planting,—of their public worship and government and discipline ; and providentially we have at this very point of our narrative a flood of additional light in one of St. Paul's letters written to the Corinthians during this three years' residence at Ephesus.

The rise of the Corinthian Church had been precisely similar to that of the Ephesian. The Apostle had been compelled to secede from the Jewish synagogue, and in the house of one of the disciples had organized his separate congregation, which had grown into the great Church of Corinth. The constitution of the one Church doubtless corresponded to that of the other ; and of this constitution, even in its minute details, we may glean much from the Epistle. We are enabled to picture them in their assembly, the women veiled<sup>1</sup>, the men alone allowed

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 5.

to speak<sup>1</sup>; we seem to hear the psalm, the doctrine, the rapt utterance of those who spake with tongues<sup>2</sup>; we seem to see the effect on the bystander joining in spite of himself in their worship, and going home to report to his friends that God is of a truth in that congregation<sup>3</sup>. We see them too at their evening meal or 'love-feast,' the poor partaking of the contributions of the rich; we hear the loud Amen at the giving of thanks<sup>4</sup>, and when all have partaken, the blessing of the cup, and the solemn breaking of the bread in remembrance of the Lord, felt by all to be a veritable communion in His Body and in His blood<sup>5</sup>. We learn something too of their discipline, how any who had a matter against another was exhorted to bring it before the saints for arbitration<sup>6</sup>; we know the terrible form of excommunication for gross offences against morality, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in full assembly, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'<sup>7</sup>. Something is told of their finances, how the laity were expected to contribute to the support of the Ministry<sup>8</sup>, and how every Lord's Day there was an offertory for the poor of Judæa<sup>9</sup>.

Alas! we see also only too plainly, in this same Epistle, the dangers to which these Gentile Churches were exposed, dangers from which the Churches of Palestine were exempt,—the temptation to join in the revelry that followed the Heathen sacrifices<sup>10</sup>, or at

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xiv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. xiv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. xiv. 25.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. xiv. 16.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. x. 16.

<sup>6</sup> I Cor. vi. 1.

<sup>7</sup> I Cor. v. 4, 5.

<sup>8</sup> I Cor. ix. 11, 14.

<sup>9</sup> I Cor. xvi. 2.

<sup>10</sup> I Cor. x. 7, 20, 21.

any rate to imitate it in their own festivals<sup>1</sup>, the speculative doubts which the Greek sophists were ever whispering in their ear<sup>2</sup>, the perplexities of their domestic life<sup>3</sup>.

All these details, gathered from one single Epistle, enable us to picture to ourselves very vividly the daily life of the Christians of these Greek Churches.

Some additional information respecting their organization is furnished by the Epistles which St. Paul wrote to Timothy ten years later, when he left him in charge of this same Ephesian Church. At that later date we find distinct mention of a second order in the ministry, of *deacons* ordained to help the Presbyters or Bishops, with very careful rules for their selection<sup>4</sup> and promotion into the Presbytery<sup>5</sup>. We hear also of deaconesses<sup>6</sup>, and of widows, as intrusted with special functions of hospitality and almsgiving<sup>7</sup>, widows above sixty years of age being supported out of the common fund. To Timothy at that later date was intrusted the general oversight of this Ephesian Church, and the ordination of its several ministers; and though it would be an anachronism to call him a Bishop in our sense of the word, and inconsistent with the temporary nature of his commission, yet the employment of such occasional delegates by the Apostle may well have suggested the permanent Episcopate of the next generation<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21,—where the rich are reproved for snatching greedily their own contributions at the love-feast, so that while they committed excess, the poor got nothing.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii.    <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iii.    <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 11 (according to Jerome, Chrysostom, Alford, Ellicott, Wordsworth).    <sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. v. 10.

<sup>8</sup> On the development of the Episcopate, see Appendix, p. 145, and Prof. Lightfoot's Essay in his Commentary on: *Philippians*.

Thus, however imperfectly, we fill up the outline of the outward form and constitution of these Churches which St. Paul was organizing. But if this be difficult, how far more difficult is it to realize to ourselves at all adequately the intense spiritual energy which animated them !

Never were St. Paul's own miraculous powers more astonishingly displayed. Writing from Corinth, he hardly trusted himself to speak of those things which Christ was working by him, 'through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God'<sup>1</sup>. 'Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among them (the Corinthians) in signs and wonders and mighty deeds'<sup>2</sup>. At Ephesus it seemed as though a healing virtue streamed forth from the Apostle, as from his Divine Master of old ; 'so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them'<sup>3</sup>. Counterfeit exorcisms were put to open shame, as in the case of the seven sons of the priest Sceva<sup>4</sup> ; and the Ephesians, who might at first have confounded the works of the Spirit with the popular magic of the day, confessed their error by a costly sacrifice<sup>5</sup>, burning their books of incantations before the eyes of all. 'So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed'<sup>6</sup>.

Nor were these powers confined to the Apostle. There was a general outpouring of the Holy Ghost on all. Both at Corinth and at Ephesus, St. Paul freely imparted to others the Pentecostal gifts, laying his

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xix. 13, 14.

<sup>5</sup> The value of the books may be estimated at £1770 of our money.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xix. 19, 20.

hands upon them so that they prophesied and spake with tongues. Great must have been the public sensation created by the unwonted spectacle of such a company of prophets, such an inspired community, daily increasing in numbers and influence in the heart of a Greek city ! But on the converts themselves Paul was ever labouring to impress the comparative unimportance of these transitory gifts, and the far higher value of the graces of the Spirit, of the Faith and Hope and Love which were to be the *abiding*<sup>1</sup> marks of the Christian Church. Such was St. Paul's first work of organization in the Ephesian Church, laying anew the foundations of their faith and unfolding the true significance of Christian baptism ; and such was the outward form and constitution which he gave to their communion. Hitherto they had continued to be members of the Jewish Synagogue. And while there was any hope of the whole Synagogue being Christianized, St. Paul was unwilling to separate himself from it. But at the end of three months it was clear to him that this hope was vain. So, after his manner, precisely as he had done at Corinth, he withdrew with his disciples ; and borrowing the lecture-hall of one of the wealthier converts, he established there his separate Christian Synagogue or Church. There daily they assembled themselves together for instruction and for breaking of bread and for prayer. For two years Paul laboured, and with what effect we know. With all their faults and infirmities, how strikingly these early Christian congregations were distinguished from the surrounding population by their purity and holiness of life, is clear from the opening sentences of almost all St. Paul's Epistles.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Christ's Church need not for one moment regret the cessation of miraculous powers, if she retain this more excellent gift of holiness. By this test must we answer to ourselves the question whether we have received the Holy Ghost since we believed<sup>1</sup>. And if to some it seems as though the lamp of the Holy Spirit has paled since those early days, let us remember that a lamp may *seem* to lose its lustre when transferred from darkness into daylight. Let us at any rate thank God that we are no longer surrounded by such dark immorality of private life and public opinion as that from which these Churches of Corinth and Ephesus were struggling to emerge.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 2.



## CHAPTER XV

### St. Paul's Sufferings at this period

**I**N the narrative of the next twelve months of the Apostle's life we have most vividly brought before us the constant strain, both of body and of mind, in which his work involved him.

In the persecution which drove him from Ephesus we have a sample of the dangers *from without* which ever threatened him; in his own account of his journey into Macedonia we see how 'the care of all the Churches' exhausted and oppressed him; in the same letter (2 Cor.), and in that to the Galatians, we have allusions to painful bodily sickness; in the journal of his voyage to Jerusalem he seems conscious that the brightest portion of his ministry is over, and that henceforth bonds and afflictions await him.

And first, the Ephesian persecution, to which he seems to allude in his letter to the Corinthians, 'I have fought (so to speak<sup>1</sup>) with beasts at Ephesus.' Nothing can be more graphic than St. Luke's description of the outbreak:—the fury of the silversmiths when they found their trade deserting them; their anger with 'this Paul,' who 'throughout all Asia was

<sup>1</sup> This seems to be the real force of the qualifying words translated 'after the manner of men,' showing that he is speaking metaphorically. So Tertullian, paraphrasing a very similar passage, clearly metaphorical (1 Cor. iv. 9): 'Nos Deus Apostolos novissimos elegit velut *bestiarios*.'—*De Pud.* 14.

persuading people that they be no gods which are made with hands'; the confusion in the theatre, 'some crying one thing and some another, and the more part not knowing wherefore they were come together'; how the stewards of the games<sup>1</sup> helped to dissuade Paul from adventuring himself among them; how the Jew Alexander would fain have disclaimed all connection with the Christians, but could get no hearing; and how at last the town-clerk appeased the people, flattering their vanity as guardians of the great goddess, laughing at the idea of their temple having anything to fear from a few strangers, who (they must confess) had never attempted to profane it, reminding the craftsmen that if they had any complaint the assizes were then going on, and that the Proconsuls of Asia were always ready to do men justice, and that by such unseemly riots they would only incur the displeasure of the Romans. St. Luke continues: 'and after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia: and when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months.'

And thus in two brief verses he passes over what we know to have been one of the most painfully anxious seasons of the Apostle's life. For St. Paul's own account of it we must turn to the second Epistle to the Corinthians.

We there learn how from Ephesus, in great depression of mind, he went to Troas, and there awaited Titus's return from Corinth. Titus had been the bearer

<sup>1</sup> Such is the meaning of the word translated 'certain of the chief of Asia.' Their protection of the Apostle is to be noted, showing the success of his ministry among the higher classes.

of his first Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>1</sup>. St. Paul's anxiety to hear how they had received his reproofs had been quickened to intensity by news that had reached him in the interval, news that wounded his sensitive nature to the quick,—how some Judaizer was making a party against him in Corinth, questioning his claim to be an Apostle<sup>2</sup>, and even his personal integrity<sup>3</sup>. Pentecost came, but no Titus arrived. Sick with suspense, he tells us how he pushed on into Macedonia to meet him : 'I had no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus my brother'<sup>4</sup>. 'When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side ; without were fightings, within were fears'<sup>5</sup>.

When at length Titus met him with far better tidings than he had dared to hope for, the reaction in his mind is no less vividly expressed :—'I am filled with comfort,' 'God who comforts them that are cast down, comforted me by the coming of Titus'<sup>6</sup>.

Titus was despatched at once with the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the Apostle followed by way of Illyricum. But hardly was he relieved from one anxiety when another came upon him. On his arrival at Corinth tidings reached him of the apostasy, or all but apostasy, of the Galatian Church. There too, his inveterate enemies the Judaizers, who had never forgiven him his victory over them at Antioch, had dogged his steps, undermining his authority and undoing his work. And to the Galatians from

<sup>1</sup> This is Dean Stanley's opinion, and is ably maintained by Prof. Lightfoot in the *Camb. Journal of Class. and Sacred Philology*, of June 1855.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 13.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 5.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 6.

Corinth<sup>1</sup> he sent the severest of all his Epistles. In this Epistle we see how his controversy with the Judaizers occupied all his thoughts. The most vital principles of Christianity seemed to him at stake. Most interesting is it to see how the controversy, which began by being a personal one (as we see it in his second Epistle to the Corinthians), deepened at once in St. Paul's mind into a doctrinal one (in his Epistle to the Galatians); and how out of it there emerged, for the instruction of the Church in all time, the great argument of the Epistle to the Romans, of which the Epistle to the Galatians may be considered the rough draft. The contrast in tone between the two, between the impassioned invective of the one and the calmer logic of the other, is at once explained when we remember that one was sent to the fickle half-barbarous Gauls of Asia Minor, the other to the highly civilized Romans, whom, though personally still unknown to them, he had 'desired these many years'<sup>2</sup> to visit.

Such persecutions as that which drove him from Ephesus, such mental anxieties as those which oppressed him afterwards, could not fail to impair the Apostle's health, never very strong. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>3</sup> and in that to the Galatians<sup>4</sup>, he seems to allude to severe bodily suffering of some kind. That it was acutely painful is clear from the expression he uses, suggesting the idea of a sharp point piercing him<sup>5</sup>. 'Thrice (he says) he be-

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. Lightfoot's *Galatians*.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. iv. 14.

<sup>5</sup> It escaped the attention of Dr. J. Brown, in favour of his most ingenious argument to prove that it was intense pain in the eyeballs, impairing his eyesight, that the phrase *σκόλοpes ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς* occurs in Numb. xxxiii. 55.

sought the Lord that it might depart from him ; but the Lord replied, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'

Strange it may well seem to our first thoughts that one gifted with such marvellous powers for the healing of the diseases of others should have been wholly unable to cure his own.

But this is entirely consistent with what the whole of the New Testament seems to teach us, that miraculous powers were given, not for the advantage of those who possessed them, but solely 'for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby'. St. Paul seems to have been wholly unable to restore either Epaphroditus<sup>1</sup> or Trophimus<sup>2</sup> to health, when to have done so would have been the greatest comfort to him. Nor does our blessed Lord appear to have ever used His divine power to shield Himself from harm. To make such use of it was the suggestion of the Tempter in the wilderness. Not unmindful of the warning, St. Paul calls his malady a *temptation*, a *buffeting* of Satan : and in the reply, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' he recognised the voice of Him who Himself had crushed the temptation with the words, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' 'the cup which My Father hath given me shall I not drink it ?'

Not one of Christ's Apostles had learned the lesson of the Cross more profoundly than St. Paul. In the arena<sup>3</sup> of persecution, in spiritual discouragement, in acute bodily pain, he had taken up his cross daily. And now it was more and more borne in upon him that his time had come for being made 'conformable'

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 9 ; xv. 32.

to his Lord and Master by a yet nearer 'fellowship of suffering'<sup>1</sup>.

We see it in the concluding words of his Epistle to the Romans, written on the eve of his departure from Corinth : ' Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea '<sup>2</sup>. We see symptoms of their increasing hatred in their plot to destroy him on his embarkation<sup>3</sup>, obliging him to take the longer route through Macedonia.

We see how the sense of approaching danger was more and more casting its shadow over the Apostle's mind in his affecting farewells to the several Churches where he paused on his coasting voyage. First at Troas, where so many of his faithful friends rallied round him, and where, upon the Lord's Day, when they came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight, and talking a long while, even till break of day, so departed. A Sunday never to be forgotten by his friends ! He who had restored life to the poor youth who had fallen through the window of their lighted chamber, had no power to assure his friends of the safety of his own life !

So again touching at Miletus, and to save time, requesting the Ephesian Presbyters to meet him on the shore, how affecting is the leave-taking ! ' And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there ; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 3.

none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

‘And he kneeled down and prayed with them all ; and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.’ •

No less touching was the farewell at Tyre : failing to dissuade him from his steadfast purpose to go up to keep the approaching feast at Jerusalem, they here too accompanied him to the beach ; ‘and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city ; and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed ; and so took leave.’ So at Ptolemais, so at Cæsarea ; but nothing is suffered to unnerve him. At this last place, in the house of Philip the evangelist, one of his friends, gifted with prophecy, but not gifted with wisdom, seized his girdle, saying, ‘Thus shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.’ ‘And when we heard this,’ St. Luke adds, ‘we besought him not to go.’ ‘What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?’ was St. Paul’s only answer ; ‘for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus.’

Yes, it was even so ; it was the Lord Jesus who was in all his thoughts. And in our thoughts also surely, as we read the narrative. For is it not so ? This

solemn progress to Jerusalem, from point to point, told in such detail,—the Apostle with such full and vivid consciousness of the sufferings which there awaited him ; his friends clinging round him, and with tears dissuading him,—what is it that we are all reminded of ? Surely of Him who near thirty years before had set His face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem ! ‘ Master, of late the Jews sought to kill Thee, and goest Thou thither again ? ’ Christ knew it : ‘ the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be delivered to the Gentiles ; ’ and still He journeyed onward. ‘ Let us also go that we may die with Him ; ’ and as they followed they were afraid. How closely is the Apostle now treading in his Master’s steps !—rejoicing that there was some space left for him to fill in the great measure of the afflictions of Christ, for His Body’s sake, the Church<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.



## CHAPTER XVI

### St. Paul on his Defence

‘AND when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done!’ And so they journeyed onward, St. Paul and his faithful friends, of whom St. Luke himself was one.

At Jerusalem, as he foreknew, the storm burst upon him. And yet he sought not persecution. Nay, he did all that in him lay to disarm and conciliate his enemies. To understand this we ought to read again those latter chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, written at the beginning of this same year, and remind ourselves of what we are apt to forget, that while St. Paul was a Christian, he was also a most faithful Israelite. ‘Two objects’ (it has been well said<sup>1</sup>) ‘were dearer to him than his life, first, to testify of Him whom God had raised from the dead ; and, second, to prove that in so doing he was a faithful Israelite ;’ that, after all, it was ‘for the hope of his fathers’ that he was contending.

Hence his anxiety to vindicate his loyalty to his nation, acceding to the suggestion of St. James and the Presbytery, and paying for the offerings of those four poor Nazarites, and appearing before the priests on their behalf ; and then in the uproar which his appearance in the Temple occasioned, addressing the

<sup>1</sup> Article on St. Paul by the Rev. J. Ll. Davies, in Smith’s *Bible Dictionary*.

Jews in their own dialect ; reminding them that he had been as zealous a Jew as any of his hearers, as the high priest and all the estate of the elders could testify ; but that the God of their fathers had revealed to him the Just One ; and finally defending his mission to the Gentiles, as commanded by their own Messiah in that very Temple.

Nothing could be more admirable, nothing more skilful, than St. Paul's endeavour to win the ear of his countrymen. But he failed.

The mystery of iniquity was already working ; the mention of the hated Gentiles inflamed them : ' Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live ! ' And again, as at Thessalonica, as at Corinth, as at Ephesus, so now at Jerusalem, the *restraining power* was the Roman Government. Nothing can be more graphic than the contrast between the tempers of the two nations in what follows :— ' And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, the chief captain '—Claudius Lysias, the tribune of the cohort that garrisoned the Fort Antonia—' brought him into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging ; that he might know wherefore they were thus crying out against him. And as they were binding him down with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned ? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest : for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman ? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free—

born.' The examination by torture was countermanded at once by Lysias, alarmed to find how nearly he had violated the liberty of a Roman citizen<sup>1</sup> : but to protect St. Paul from the fury of the people he kept him in custody.

The even-handed justice of the Roman law, while it protected the citizen of the Empire, respected also the constituted authorities of the conquered Province. Therefore on the morrow Lysias convened the Sanhedrim, and Paul was arraigned before his countrymen.

Again therefore St. Paul is on his defence, at the bar of that Court where he himself, some two-and-twenty years before, sat in judgment upon Stephen ; at the bar of that Court where a greater One than Stephen had been condemned to die for blasphemy ; for the iniquity of that Court is not yet full, and it must be so ere the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost<sup>2</sup>.

For a moment—it was but for a moment—the brutal conduct of the High Priest made St. Paul forget himself, but instantly recovering his temper, and apologizing, he showed in his defence the same anxiety that he had shown the day before, to identify himself with whatever remnant there might be in Israel of truth or nobler aspiration.

'Brethren,' he cried, 'I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees ; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.'

The effect of this appeal to the nobler portion of his

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<sup>1</sup> 'O nomen dulce libertatis ! O jus eximium nostrae civitatis ! . . . . Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum, scelus, verberari.'—Cicero, in *Verrem* ii. v. 63, 66.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 16.

judges was instantaneous. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees even more than they hated the Christians, and would not condemn the man who thus confessed their favourite doctrine. There arose a loud shout from their side of the hall, that they found no fault in him, but if what he said yesterday were true, and an angel or spirit had really spoken to him . . . the rest<sup>1</sup> was drowned in uproar and fierce tumult ; and Lysias, afraid lest Paul should be pulled in pieces by them, ordered his troops to rescue him, and lodge him in their own quarters in the adjoining fortress.

That very night, as he lay sleepless on a soldier's pallet, conscious of having again failed in his defence of the Gospel, with the fearful scenes through which he had passed still swimming before his eyes, the loud execrations of those men of sin still ringing in his ears, there came to him the still small voice he knew so well. His dear Lord was by his side, as at Corinth, so here too, in his extremity ; and still He called him westward :—‘ Be of good cheer, for as thou hast testified of Me unto Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also unto Rome.’

After that day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy, in that dark night of utter defeat, as it seemed to him, how this vision of his Lord, bidding him be of good cheer, must have beamed upon his soul, like a single star when all the sky is wrapt in gloom ! Through all the darkness of the two years' imprisonment that followed, through all the storms of Hadria, and the long winter at Melita, what a pole-star of hope must that one word have been to him, again

<sup>1</sup> The words ‘ Let us not fight against God ’ seem to have been supplied by a copyist, thinking of Gamaliel.

and again recurring to his memory, 'Be of good cheer, for unto Rome too thou shalt bear My witness.'

*To Rome!* It was the very word which, had Paul now died, would have been found engraven on his heart. And now he had his Lord's assurance that his one dear hope should be fulfilled, Christ's word had gone forth, 'to Rome,' and it could not return unto Him void.

But if in his inspired moments a man's thoughts may be as God's thoughts, his ways of accomplishing them are seldom as God's ways. God loves to fulfil His great purposes through humble unlooked-for instruments.

We know nothing, absolutely nothing, of that sister of St. Paul, or how she came to be near him (sister-like) in the hour of his extremest peril, at Jerusalem, with her boy. But that boy saved the life of him on whom the evangelization of Europe now depended. St. Luke's unrivalled narrative must not be altered in a single word :—

'When it was day, the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. . . . And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he came and entered the castle, and told Paul. Then Paul called one of the centurions, and said, Take this youth to the chief captain, for he hath something to tell him. So the centurion took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, The prisoner Paul called me, and prayed me to bring this youth unto thee, as having something to tell thee. Then the chief captain took the boy by the hand, and stepped aside, and privately asked him, What is it thou hast to tell me? And he said, The Jews have

agreed to desire of thee that thou wouldst to-morrow bring down Paul into the Sanhedrim, as though for the purpose of gaining<sup>1</sup> some more accurate information concerning him. But do not thou yield to them : for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, who have bound themselves with an oath, neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him ; and now they are ready, looking for a promise from thee. So the chief captain let the youth depart, after charging him, See thou let it not out to any that thou hast given me this information.

‘ And he called two of his centurions, and said, Make ready two hundred heavy armed soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and two hundred spearmen, at nine o’clock to-night, and provide pack-horses<sup>2</sup> for the prisoner Paul to ride, that they may convey him safely to Felix the Procurator.’

Then follows the letter reporting the circumstances to ‘his Excellency.’ They marched all through the night, reached Antipatris by daybreak ; and pressing on with the cavalry, the centurion was able to report himself at the head-quarters of the province (Cæsarea), the following afternoon.

It is worth while to notice the rank and importance attached by these Romans to their prisoner, nor could it fail to impress the Jews ; this large military escort, and official despatch, and above all the summoning of the High Priest and others of the Sanhedrim, to

<sup>1</sup> This translation suits the various readings equally.

<sup>2</sup> From the use of the plural it may perhaps be inferred that some of Paul’s friends were allowed to accompany him. The expression ‘*came* (*παρὰ τὸν ποταμὸν*) into the Castle’ in Acts xxiii. 16, seems to imply that St. Luke was with him in the Fortress of Antonia.

appear as prosecutors in the Roman Court at Cæsarea. Would they have made that journey of seventy miles, or engaged that Roman pleader, in the case of any of the twelve Galilean Apostles?

For the third time the Apostle is on his defence, and this time in the Roman Court. But it is not to the coarse and slavish mind of Felix<sup>1</sup>, but to the conscience of those Sanhedrists that he addresses himself.

Tertullus had charged Paul with creating a disturbance, with being a heretic—a Nazarene, and with profaning the Temple. On all these points St. Paul replies: As to disturbance he defies them to prove it; as to heresy, he worshipped the God of his fathers, believing all things in the Law and the Prophets, and holding, as his accusers also held, the doctrine of a resurrection; and as to profaning the Temple, he was there with alms and oblations after due purification; so false was the accusation of those Asiatic Jews.

In every one of St. Paul's conciliatory phrases we see that his heart's desire is still towards Israel, that they might be saved. O that his people would have hearkened unto him, even in this last hour of their visitation! but it is too late. 'Unto Jerusalem' no longer; 'unto Rome' must he now bear his witness!

<sup>1</sup> This is the character given to Felix by Tacitus; 'sævitia,' 'libido,' 'servile ingenium.'—*Hist.* v. 9.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Appeal to Cæsar*

TWO whole years the irresolute Felix was permitted to keep St. Paul in military custody at Cæsarea, often sending for him and conversing with him, partly in the hope of receiving a bribe to release him, partly out of curiosity, partly because the superstitious man was fascinated while he trembled, as Paul reasoned of righteousness and temperance and a judgment to come. That 'something after death' has made cowards of many bolder men than Felix.

And meanwhile did it seem to the Apostle that his Lord was slack concerning His promise? No; he well remembered how, again and again in his past experience, it was by such apparent hindrances as this that the cause of the Gospel had been most furthered. And in a career of such incessant exertion this pause may well have been needed to restore his broken health and refresh his weary spirit. The holiest, too, need such seasons of retirement for more sustained communion with their Lord.

It has been suggested<sup>1</sup>—and with much probability, for reasons that need not be here recounted—that St. Luke's Gospel, certainly composed under St. Paul's superintendence, was written during the leisure of

<sup>1</sup> By the younger Thiersch, I believe, in his *Christian Church*.



these two years. Certain it is that 'none of his acquaintance were forbidden to minister or come unto him;' and if so we may be sure St. Luke would be ever at his side. Festus's exclamation, 'Thy much learning,' or thy incessant study, 'hath turned thy brain,' may have been suggested by the *books and parchments* which the Apostle in this as in another imprisonment<sup>1</sup> had asked for. If it was so, and if the two had been really occupied on their Gospel, it is interesting to note how the concluding words of St. Paul's great speech before Agrippa in the last week of his confinement, are the very echo of the last words of the Gospel :—

'And Jesus said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' If St. Paul and his companion were fresh from the inditing of these words, how naturally does the thought recur in the Apostle's speech :—

'—Witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first to rise from the dead,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 13. This is Dean Howson's explanation of Festus's exclamation. For connecting it with the writing of the Gospel, the Dean is not responsible.

and should show light unto His People and to the Nations'<sup>1</sup>.

But in speaking of this speech before Agrippa, we are anticipating the narrative.

When at length Felix was superseded and Porcius Festus succeeded to the Province, the protecting Providence of Christ was again needed to shield His Apostle from imminent peril.

For the Jews, thinking to take advantage of Festus's ignorance of the circumstances, sent a petition to the new Viceroy that, as a favour, he would give up to them the prisoner Paul, and send him back to Jerusalem, meaning (so implacable was their hatred) to waylay and assassinate him on the road. Festus, with much dignity, replied that it was not the manner of the Romans to surrender any man to his prosecutors uncondemned ; but if they chose to come down to Cæsarea he should be confronted with his accusers.

Again, therefore, St. Paul was on his defence, and repelled their charges, proving to the satisfaction of the Procurator that neither against the Jewish law, nor against the Temple, nor against Cæsar, had he offended.

And did he then really owe his safety to his judge ? No ; like Pilate of old, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, Festus would even now have given way, and Paul ere

<sup>1</sup> The correspondency is the more striking, because the thought is a very deep one,—that the sufferings and resurrection of the Messiah were foreshown by *Moses* as well as by the prophets ;—a thought that could only be fathomed by one who had accustomed himself to see in the Anointed people, with their continual sacrifices never making the comers thereunto perfect, one continued type of the Anointed One who by one all-sufficient sacrifice should perfect for ever Himself (by Resurrection from the dead) and all who came to Him.

night fell would have been in the grasp of his assassins, had not One above given him in this hour a mouth and wisdom which his adversaries could neither gain-say nor resist :—

‘I stand before Cæsar’s tribunal, and there ought my trial to be. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou knowest full well. If I am guilty, and have done anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die ; but if the things whereof these men accuse me are nought, no man may give me up to them. *I appeal unto Cæsar.*’

Festus conferred a moment with his Council, and saw that he had no power to question the appeal. ‘Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar, to Cæsar shalt thou go.’

Often had this appeal, so powerful in the mouth of a Roman citizen, been heard before ; why has it so much more grandeur in the mouth of Paul ?—Surely the thought that filled and inspired him at this moment was the thought of Him who had stood beside him in the Fortress of Antonia. ‘To Rome,’—he had his Lord’s word for it,—he must bear his witness. Hence the holy confidence, the solemnity of his appeal. In his thought he was appealing, not to Cæsar, but to Christ.

This word ‘*appello*’ suspended all further proceedings in a Roman Court of Law ; it only remained for Festus to report the case to the Emperor. But in his ignorance of Jewish theology, he was perplexed, and only too gladly availed himself of the accidental presence on a visit of Herod Agrippa II., king of Chalcis<sup>1</sup>, who by education was a Jew, to obtain help in explaining the matter to Nero. Agrippa was inter-

<sup>1</sup> The son of the King Herod Agrippa I., who put to death James the brother of John, and died A.D. 44 (see Acts xii.)

ested, and expressed a wish to hear the prisoner himself.

On the morrow therefore they came with great state ; and the audience-chamber was filled with officers and courtiers to listen to the eloquent Apostle.

It is the last great speech of St. Paul recorded in Holy Scripture, and the greatest. He was speaking not only 'before rulers and kings,' but also to one who would report his words to Rome. He seems to have felt, too, that it was in some sense his farewell to the land of his fathers ; an *apologia pro vitâ sua* therefore.

With that gesture of the hand with which the orators of antiquity invited attention<sup>1</sup>, and turning with marked courtesy to the king as to one 'expert in all Jewish customs and questions,' he proceeded to maintain the perfect consistency of his manner of life from his youth upward. It was he, not his accusers, that was the faithful Israelite. For what was the one constant hope of the twelve tribes ? Was it not the hope of a Messiah who should suffer and yet live for ever ; and through whom God's true Israel, after all their sufferings, should also rise again to an eternal life ? And yet it was for clinging to this hope that he was now accused, and that by Jews<sup>2</sup>. Would they know the ground on which he believed that such a resurrection had now been realized ? He will tell them.

Then he related in minute detail how the risen Jesus had appeared to him, had convinced him, in spite of all his inveterate and passionate prepossessions, that

<sup>1</sup> Wetstein quotes several passages in illustration of this. Apuleius says that pleaders extended the first and second fingers, closing the third and fourth.

<sup>2</sup> There is no article in the best mss.

He was the Messiah, and solemnly commissioned him to publish to all men, Jews and Gentiles, what he had seen and heard, that they too might turn from darkness to light, and by faith in the risen Lord lay hold of the divine life so offered to them.

It was for the discharge of this commission, thus laid upon him by their own Messiah, that the Jews had seized him in their temple and endeavoured to kill him.

Therefore, summing up, he repeated what he had begun by asserting, that in preaching the death and resurrection of Christ, he was but witnessing to the fulfilment of all their holy Scriptures, and approving himself a true and consistent Israelite.

To Festus, fresh from Rome, and ignorant of the Jewish religion, all this was the merest infatuation. To Agrippa therefore St. Paul made one more solemn appeal, but it was in vain. The only answer he got from the voluptuary was a mocking one, 'Thou wilt soon be trying to persuade *me* to become a Christian.' 'Would to God,' was St. Paul's noble reply, 'that, soon or late, not thou only, but all who hear me this day, might become such as I am,—except,' he added, lifting up his chained wrists, 'except these bonds.'

And so the audience was concluded, all agreeing after conference that he had done nothing deserving death, or even imprisonment; Agrippa adding that the man might have been set at liberty had he not appealed to Cæsar. As it was, they had no option but to put him on board ship with a gang of other prisoners for Rome.

And thus both the rancour of the Jews and the careless indifference of the Romans were alike overruled, in order to secure the fulfilment of the divine purpose. And it was because of his own inspired appeal to Cæsar that he was sent to Rome.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Voyage to Rome

THE ancient merchant ships of the Mediterranean were not much smaller than our own; the 'Castor and Pollux' carried 276 men<sup>1</sup>, besides her cargo. They had usually one mast, and one large sail, fastened to an enormous yard, which could be raised or lowered<sup>2</sup>. They were steered by paddle-rudders<sup>3</sup>, one on either side. Mr. Smith of Jordanhill, whose well-known work on *the Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* has almost exhausted this subject, thinks that they could sail within seven points of the wind<sup>4</sup>, and might therefore beat to windward in good weather. Before the wind their rate of sailing seems to have been about seven knots in the hour. But without compass, and without charts, their voyages were usually coasting voyages; and from Michaelmas<sup>5</sup> to Lady Day, when whole days might pass and 'neither sun nor stars appear'<sup>6</sup>, navigation was if possible suspended.

Bearing these few points in mind, we shall understand St. Luke's journal of the voyage, for he as well

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvii. 37. There were 600 on board the ship in which Josephus was wrecked. See his *Life*, ch. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvii. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Acts xxvii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Corresponding with the Fast, *i.e.* the day of Expiation: Acts xxvii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xxvii. 20, and Livy xxxvi. 9.

as Aristarchus of Thessalonica accompanied St. Paul.

Touching at Sidon, where the courtesy of the centurion Julius allowed the Apostle to see his friends, they coasted northward till the hills of Cilicia, which he knew so well, rose before them. Then, rounding Cyprus, under the lee of the island, they reached Myra, where the centurion transferred his prisoners to an Alexandrian vessel bound for Rome. The north-westerly gales continuing, they, imprudently perhaps, ran to the south to get under the lee of Crete.

By this course they were committed to an open sea voyage on leaving Crete; and the Fast-day<sup>1</sup> being already passed, Paul warned them they had best winter where they were, at 'Fair Havens,' else there might be much damage and loss of life. But the sailors thought they might at least hold on as far as Phœnix. And, a south breeze springing up, they 'thought they had obtained their purpose;' when, without a moment's warning, a furious wind<sup>2</sup> from the mountains<sup>3</sup> struck the ship, and, whirling her round, drove her out to sea. Fearing lest this terrible *Levanter* should carry them right across to the dangers of the African coast, they took advantage of a brief lull under the lee of the island of Clauda, to make all tight for weathering the storm. With difficulty they got their boat on board; then they secured their timbers by *undergirding*<sup>4</sup>; and lastly they lowered

<sup>1</sup> See note <sup>4</sup> on preceding page.

<sup>2</sup> Called 'Eurakylon' (*i.e.*, Euro-aquilon in Latin), for such is the reading of the best mss.,—North-easter.

<sup>3</sup> The words 'against it' in our translation ought to be rendered 'down from Crete.'

<sup>4</sup> Passing ropes round the hull, to keep the planks from starting under the strain of rough weather.

the yard-arm, and took in sail<sup>1</sup>. And so lying-to, the vessel drifted westward. The very next day she seems to have leaked, for we find them lightening the ship; and on the third day all lent a hand—Paul and his companions included—in throwing out the gear.

For a whole fortnight they thus drifted, under an overcast sky, giving themselves up for lost, with no heart to eat their food or make further effort to save their ship.

But while the sailors despaired the Apostle prayed,—prayed to Him whom he believed in, not only as the Messiah of his nation, but also as the Lord and ‘maker of heaven and earth and sea, and all that in them is’<sup>2</sup>; prayed to Him who had said, ‘Unto Rome also shalt thou bear My witness’<sup>3</sup>. And his prayer was heard. That very night He to whom he prayed<sup>4</sup> stood by him, saying, ‘Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar; and lo! God hath given thee all who sail with thee!’

The light of the vision was on his face, when at day-break he gathered the crew around him,—this mysterious Jewish prisoner, whose words had come so true; and as they listened with that deepening faith in the Unseen which danger brings, he told them of his vision, and of the Divine assurance that though their ship must be lost, yet they should all be saved, in answer to his prayer, on a certain island.

At the end of the fortnight a sound of breakers in

<sup>1</sup> Not ‘strake sail,’ but ‘shortened sail.’ ‘Lowered the gear’ is Alford’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxiii. 11.

<sup>4</sup> ‘An Angel of my God’ was St. Paul’s phrase, suiting his language to his hearers. But that it was the Lord Himself, the Angel of the Covenant, is probable from the analogy of *all* St. Paul’s other visions.



the middle of the night told them they were near to land. They sounded, and found it even so. Fearing lest they should be dashed on rocks, they let go four anchors from the stern, and anxiously waited for the day.

The sailors attempted to escape in the boat ; but Paul, who was now virtually in command, insisted on the necessity of their remaining to work the ship ; so the soldiers cut adrift the boat which they were already lowering. The Apostle's next care was to restore their strength for the exertions of the morrow ; repeating his assurance that 'not a hair of their head' should perish, he exhorted all to make a meal, himself setting the example, breaking bread and 'giving thanks to God before them all.'

When daylight came they lessened the ship's draught by casting out her freight of corn ; then cutting her cables and hoisting sail, they loosened their rudders, and steered her for a point of the shore that seemed convenient for stranding her.

Thus she was run aground, and soon began to go to pieces in the surf. The soldiers were for killing the prisoners ; but, anxious to save Paul, the centurion prevented it, and bade all, by swimming, or as best they could, make for the shore. So all were saved.

That the island on which they were wrecked was that which is known to us as Malta, is now proved. The islanders were Phœnicians, under a Roman governor ; and most hospitably they entertained the shipwrecked strangers through the three remaining winter months. St. Paul from the very first they regarded with veneration, awe-struck by the way in which he had cast off a deadly viper. And he was able to repay them abundantly for their hospitality. Those same hands which

had helped to work the ship, and gather firewood on the shore, were laid upon their sick with prayer, and they recovered. In their gratitude they loaded them with kindnesses ; and when at length the spring came, and they were embarking once more in another Alexandrian ship, the islanders supplied them with all things that they needed for their voyage.

This second voyage was accomplished without adventure, through the straits of Messina, and along the lovely coast of Italy. Little did St. Paul think as they anchored in the Bay of Naples, that the green and peaceful mountain on his right would so soon break forth in fire and ashes, and bury in its first eruption the Jewish princess who had so often conversed with him in his imprisonment at Cæsarea<sup>1</sup>.

Such is St. Luke's narrative of St. Paul's voyage and shipwreck, a narrative of such vivid interest that it charms the child no less than the most experienced seaman<sup>2</sup> ; a narrative so unassailable in its minute accuracy, that readers who dare to reject all the rest of the New Testament record, are fain to admit that they find here imbedded in it a fragment of self-evident authenticity.

But to us who accept this Book of the Acts as God's word, intended to make us 'wise unto salvation,' there is a question behind of no small difficulty. Let us state it unreservedly : Here is an inspired writer occupying himself wholly, throughout a long chapter, with details of geography and navigation, of havens and islands, of rocks and shallows, of winds and currents, of sails and rudders, of nautical terms, of sailors'

<sup>1</sup> See Conybeare and Howson.

<sup>2</sup> Dean Howson relates, on private authority, that Nelson read it on the morning of the Battle of Copenhagen.

hopes and fears ; scarce a word added of directly spiritual purport. How is it ? ' The minuteness of the narrative may be accounted for by the circumstance that St. Luke himself was on board the ship, and kept a diary<sup>1</sup>. Granted ; but why was he inspired to embody it all in Holy Scripture ? He who afforded no space for St. Paul's evangelization of Galatia and Illyricum, who compressed into a single verse three months of ministry at Corinth, why is he permitted to fill a whole chapter at the close of his book with these so-called *secular* details ?

First : Holy Scripture knows not this modern distinction between what is religious and what is secular. The Bible claims *all* for God, as in history, so in daily life : ' that saith of Cyrus<sup>2</sup>, no less than of Moses<sup>3</sup>, ' he is God's shepherd ' ; that bids us, ' whether we eat or drink, or *whatever we do*, do *all* to the glory of God.' Those hands of Paul, whether weaving the tent-cloth, or imparting the gifts of the Spirit, whether helping to lighten the ship, or lifted in prayer for his fellow-passengers, were equally serving his Lord and Master.

And as with that Lord and Master, we know not which to value most, those touching traits of His humanity, or those mighty evidences of His divinity, so with His Apostle, the sons of toil and busy brains of modern Europe are grateful for the knowledge that their great Evangelist was one of themselves, a brother man, who wrestled with the unspiritual necessities of a hard life. When such a one speaks to us of the God ' whose he is, and whom he serves '<sup>4</sup>, he speaks with power.

<sup>1</sup> Olshausen.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lxi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlv. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.

And secondly : This voyage was a crisis, or rather *the* crisis, of St. Luke's whole narrative. For what had he proposed to himself ? To trace the fulfilment of those words of the Lord which he records on his first page, to narrate the Apostles' witness, first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then in Samaria, and then 'to the uttermost part of the earth.' He wrote in Rome for Western Christendom. To show how the Gospel came there was the great purpose he kept steadily in view from first to last. From St. Paul himself he had learned to regard Rome as the goal of his course<sup>1</sup> ; when his history had reached it he felt that his task would be done.

How naturally, therefore, his narrative, at first sketchy and discursive, comes to confine itself more and more to him who was specially intrusted with this westward mission ; narrowing at last to a single thread of biography, as it becomes more and more evident that the fulfilment of the mission hangs upon this one life. And how naturally, when at length the Apostle is embarked on the final voyage, the interest culminates, and every peril becomes invested with critical importance !

And another thought suggests itself. May not St. Luke have felt that there was a curious correspondency between his narrative here, and that of his Gospel ?

We have already remarked how St. Paul's last journey up to Jerusalem, he so steadfast, his friends so anxious to dissuade him, reminds us of that final 'ascending up'<sup>2</sup> to Jerusalem of our Lord, on which St. Luke in his Gospel dwells at so much length.

We have seen how on his arrival the Apostle, like

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 21, xxiii. 11 ; Rom. xv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 28.

his Lord, was tried first in the Jewish, then in the Roman Court, witnessing in both his 'good confession.' We have seen him 'delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.'<sup>1</sup> We have seen how the Roman Governor found no fault in him, but wavered at the cry, 'Away with him! he is not fit to live!' We have seen lastly how his final rejection by his own people was the immediate cause, under God's providence, of his passing into the larger, freer, more spiritual life of Western Christendom.

Had any analogy occurred here also to St. Luke? Perhaps not; and yet, unconsciously, he may have felt that, as in his Gospel, it was vitally important, by the most detailed particularity, to establish the continuity of the Resurrection-life with the life which went before, so in the Acts he owed it to the Western Church to make good each link, however minute, of the chain that bound that Church to the land of the Incarnation.

However this may be, one thing is clear, that to St. Luke this voyage was one of the most vivid interest. As on each succeeding dawn he gazed at the waters of the Mediterranean, breaking in sparkles round their ship, the 'path' that led St. Paul to Rome must have seemed to him 'as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

<sup>1</sup> Compare Acts xxi. 11, with Luke xviii. 32.

## CONCLUSION

IT was in the spring of A.D. 61 that St. Paul landed at Pozzuoli, in the Bay of Naples. Some Christians who were there besought the Apostle to rest seven days among them. Thus there was time for the news of his arrival to reach Rome before him; and his friends there—Aquila and Priscilla no doubt among them—set forth along the Appian Way to meet him. The meeting—between Appii Forum and The Three Taverns, some twenty miles from Rome—must indeed have been full of holy joy. ‘And when Paul saw them, he thanked God, and took courage,’ are St. Luke’s simple words.

At Rome, the centurion Julius would deliver his prisoner and his despatches to Burrus, the Prætorian Prefect<sup>1</sup>, who gave permission that St. Paul should dwell with the soldier who guarded him in a lodging of his own, as one awaiting trial. And here his friends had free access to him.

We need not be surprised that numbers of Christians, who, like Aquila and Priscilla, or Andronicus and Junias, had been converted in the East, should have congregated at Rome. In writing to them from Corinth, St. Paul does not address them as ‘a Church,’ nor had they as yet received the Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit<sup>2</sup>. Though they may have met for prayer in each others’ houses, as in that of Aquila<sup>3</sup>, they do not

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, chap. v. p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xvi. 5.

seem to have withdrawn from the Jewish synagogue until St. Paul's visit. The occasion of this secession, the first step in the organization of a Church, St. Luke is careful to relate.

To the synagogue, on the third day after his arrival, St. Paul addressed himself, inviting the elders to come to him, as he could not go to them. Briefly he explained to them how he came to appeal to the Emperor. It was not from disloyalty to his own nation. The disloyalty was theirs who had delivered him, a faithful Israelite, into the hands of the Romans. They had driven him to this appeal in self-defence. His only offence was that he would not surrender his faith in Israel's Messiah. 'For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain,' he said, holding up his chained wrist.

They listened, and wished to hear more another time. So a day was fixed, and there was a large gathering at his lodging.

Long and earnestly, 'from morning till evening,' the Apostle reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.

But almost in vain. Though some hearkened, the most part refused to believe. And St. Paul, having delivered his testimony, formally withdrew from their communion, saying, 'The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, *they* will hearken to it.'

How St. Paul proceeded to build up that great Roman Church, the establishment of which the Lord Jesus had taught him to regard as the consummation and crowning of his Apostolic labours, St. Luke does not relate. It was abundantly known to those for whom he was writing. Two years he awaited his trial before Nero ; and doubtless during those two years, and under his supervision, this narrative was written.

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And now in closing it we may ask what is our deepest impression? what the chief lesson which through these inspired chapters the Holy Spirit has vouchsafed to teach our English Church? For as at Corinth, as at Ephesus, as at Rome, so here in England, there is a Church of Christ, which, though it may be indirectly, owes its origin to the life and labours of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. What then is the lesson that we *as a Church* are to learn?

Surely this above all, that Christ is with us! with us in our prosperity, with us in our adversity, overruling temporary evils, whether external or internal, making all things work together, often in most unlooked-for ways, for the good of His Saints and the furtherance of His Kingdom.

This is the grand lesson of the Acts of the Apostles. For in the records of these first years we see reflected, as in a small mirror, the whole eighteen centuries of the Church's history. And no century so vividly as our own. For what distinctive feature of the Church of this age is not typified in this Book?

We look at our great commercial towns, and think of Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, in which St. Paul was so anxious to establish strong centres. We look at our railways, and bethink us of those great highways with which the Roman Empire was traversed, and without which St. Paul would never have accomplished his work; our distant missions remind us of the Apostle's tours through Asia Minor, our Anglo-Saxon Bible of the Septuagint of the Dispersion; our great debates and congresses help us to realize the Council at Jerusalem; our Hospitals and Charities recall the alms-chest of the Jerusalem Church and St. Paul's collections for the poor of Judæa; our extreme opinions too find



their parallels: the overbearing rationalism of the Sadducees, the exclusive bigotry of the Pharisees, something even of the wild spiritual extravagance of an Elymas or a Simon Magus, may be found among us.

Our divisions were anticipated at Corinth, where some were of Paul, and some of Apollos, and some of Cephas; is Christ more divided now than then? Nay, are the misunderstandings which sometimes divide and distress our best and holiest, more sad than the sharp contention between St. Paul and Barnabas, or that later breach, when St. Paul withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed? The trials of faith in this our age are at least no greater than the trials and difficulties, both internal and external, with which the primitive Church had to contend.

And as surely and clearly as the unseen Lord was guiding, controlling, overruling all *then*, so surely, so clearly, is the same unseen Lord guiding, controlling, and overruling all *now*, for the purifying and strengthening and extending of His kingdom among men.

That there are Antichrists now as then threatening us, that the mystery of iniquity is even now working, that the 'restraining power' of our settled government cannot and will not always restrain, that a day of decision, more trying to the Church than any ~~she~~ *she* has known, must come before the End,—all this is true. But Christ is with us. Therefore let His Church take heart! 'He is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed; He shall help her, and that right early. He is her hope and strength, therefore will we not fear. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.'

## APPENDIX

### CHAPTER I

#### On the Propagation of the Gospel

THE three classes of hearers to whom the Gospel was preached are called, in the language of our Translators, 'Hebrews,' 'Grecians,' and 'Greeks.'

By *Hebrews* are meant the *home-Jews*, Jews born and bred in Palestine, able therefore to attend the Temple ritual as well as the Synagogue, speaking *Aramaic*, a dialect of Hebrew. To these the Twelve, and especially Peter, James (the Lord's brother), and John, addressed themselves.

By *Grecians* are meant the *foreign Jews*, or Jews of the *Dispersion*, Jews born and bred in foreign parts, whose religion had become a faith rather than a ritual, speaking Greek (the social language of the Roman Empire, as Latin was the official language), called *Hellenists* in the Greek Testament, — 'Hellen' being a Greek, and Hellenist being a Jew who *Hellenized*. To these Stephen, Barnabas, and Saul first addressed themselves.

By *Greeks* are meant sometimes natives of Greece, as in Acts xviii. 17, but more usually *Gentiles*, as opposed to Jews; for the conquests of Alexander had spread the Greek language through all the countries bordering on Palestine. To these Paul and his companions addressed themselves.

Thus the word *Greek* is properly opposed to *Jew*; the word *Grecian* is properly opposed to *Hebrew*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It is a question of much interest whether 'Greeks' or 'Grecians' — Ἕλληνας or Ἑλληνιστὰς — is the true reading in Acts xi. 20.

If, as is assumed in Chap. ix. of the Narrative, the former be the true

Of these three classes, it is clear that the first and second, being of the circumcision, were after the first few years obstinately opposed to the Gospel, while the third class, the Gentiles, eagerly received it.

Surely this fact, that the Gentiles so readily accepted the Gospel, is at first view a paradox, and needs explanation. How is it to be explained?

To some minds it may be enough to answer, 'God so willed it; and this appears from the unanimous voice of prophecy.' But to those who delight to trace the providential arrangement of secondary causes by which God ever works out the fulfilment of His prophetic Word, the question remains, 'How was it? By what predisposing circum-

reading, then the first Gentile Church was formed at Antioch, and was formed, moreover, by what has been termed the force of circumstances, without the intervention of any Apostle,—a direct act of Christ, as it were. This is clearly a matter of much interest. The grounds for believing Ἑλλήνας (Greeks, or Gentiles) to be the true reading are the following :—

1. There is a strong presumption in favour of Ἑλλήνας, for the word is opposed to the word *Jews* in the preceding verses,—not to *Hebrews*: whereas between *Hellenists* and *Jews* there is of course no opposition, the Hellenists being Jews.

2. Though the authority of the oldest mss. is divided—the Alexandrine reading Ἑλλήνας, and the Vatican Ἑλληνιστὰς—yet it is noticeable that *both* these mss. insert καὶ, showing that the converts about to be mentioned were of an exceptional kind.

3. We turn with much interest to the Sinaitic ms., and here the English reader, who has only the Tauchnitz New Testament to refer to, will be misled. For Tischendorf, usually so correct, represents both Vatican and Sinaitic mss. as reading 'Grecians.' But a reference to his large quarto edition of the Sinaitic ms. will, if I mistake not, decide the question in favour of Ἑλλήνας, and also indicate—what, so far as I am aware, has never been observed—the way in which the reading Ἑλληνιστὰς crept into the text. For the original scribe of the Sinaitic ms., by a mere clerical error, having the following word εὐαγγελιζόμενοι running in his head, wrote εὐαγγελιστὰς. And the scribes of the Vatican and Alexandrine mss. (confessedly much influenced by the Sinaitic), finding εὐαγγελιστὰς, and seeing that it made nonsense, corrected it to the word which came nearest to it in sound, namely, ἑλληνιστὰς. Whereas our copy of the Sinaitic ms. exhibits in later ink the true correction, ἑλλήνας.

stances was this ready acceptance of St. Paul's Gospel by the Gentiles brought about ? And the problem is not easily solved. For what are the facts ?

St. Paul, an unknown stranger, one of a despised race, arrives in a Greek city ; collects a group of curious intellectual Greeks around him ; tells them the story of Jesus of Nazareth, how a thousand miles off He lived and died and rose again ; asks them to believe that He is now 'the Lord of all,' of Gentiles as well as Jews, and will presently return to judge the world. Hearing of Christ thus, by the report of a stranger only, is it not a matter of some surprise that numbers of them should at once believe Paul's words, and at the risk of much persecution seek for Baptism ?

St. Paul's miracles, and the gift of tongues which the imposition of his hands conferred, are not enough to explain it ; for pretension to supernatural powers was common in those days, and in none of St. Paul's discourses or Epistles does he lay much stress on the evidence of miracles. As signs to the unbeliever (1 Cor. xiv. 22), that is, for the purpose of exciting curiosity and attention, miracles were useful ; but as proof of the truth of doctrine they are seldom appealed to by the Apostle. And in many places numbers were converted where no miracles had been wrought.

Clearly, therefore, some causes must have been at work predisposing these Gentiles to listen to the Gospel tidings. What were these predisposing causes ?

We must connect this question with another :—If St. Paul in his discourses and Epistles does not appeal to miracles, what does he appeal to, in proof of the truth of his gospel ? *Uniformly to the Old Testament Scriptures* :—and this, be it carefully observed, when he is addressing *mixed* audiences, as though the Gentile as well as the Jewish portion would appreciate this kind of evidence. The Epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans, for instance, are clearly addressed to Churches in which the Gentile element preponderated ; and yet in both he appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures, as familiar to all his readers. Still more striking is it in his

speech at Antioch in Pisidia ; his argument there is entirely drawn from the Old Testament ; but we read that the Gentiles, after listening to it, came crowding round him, beseeching him that these words might be again preached to them the next Sabbath ; 'And the next Sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.' And to them Paul pointed out how Isaiah had distinctly prophesied the conversion of the Gentiles, 'And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.'

Now this is merely a sample of what occurred in nearly all these Gentile cities. *In all of them St. Paul seems to have found large numbers of Gentiles already familiar with the Old Testament, especially with its prophetic portions, and so predisposed to listen to St. Paul's account of the fulfilment of those prophecies.*

If this fact can be substantiated—that numbers of the Gentiles were at this time familiar with, and much interested by, the sacred books of the Jewish nation—the problem which is before us is solved.

And that it was so may be thus proved :—

1. First we must realize to ourselves the extent of the Jewish *Dispersion*. Philo<sup>1</sup> tells us that not less than one million Jews lived in Alexandria and in that part of the country which extended from the plains of Libya to Ethiopia. He then goes on to describe the populousness of his nation as spread through the world. At Rome the whole of that part of the city which lay beyond the Tiber was inhabited by Jews (called *Libertini*). Petronius the Proconsul, when expostulating with Caligula about the worship of his statue, urged that the Jews 'were dispersed through all the provinces both of the continent and islands, so as almost to equal the indigenous inhabitants in number.' Again, Agrippa, writing to Caligula, says, 'Jerusalem is indeed my country, but it is the metropolis not of one region, but of many,—of

<sup>1</sup> In his two treatises *εἰς Φλάκκον* and *περὶ Ἀρετῶν*, quoted in Lyall's *Propædia*.

Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, and the chief parts of Asia, as far as Bithynia and the most remote shores of the Euxine.' 'Thessaly, Bœotia, Corinth, Peloponnesus, the whole of Greece, the continent as well as the islands of Eubœa, Cyprus, Crete, are full of Jewish colonists.'

Now this presence of Jewish traders in all the cities of the Empire, carrying with them, wherever they went, the Greek version of their Scriptures, and, in their anxiety to make Proselytes, freely admitting the Gentiles to the reading and expounding of those Scriptures in their synagogues, could not fail to interest, and have its effect on, the Gentiles.

2. Professor Westcott does not exaggerate the effect of all this on the Gentile world, when he writes, 'Under the influence of this wider instruction, a Greek body grew up around the Synagogue, not admitted into the Jewish Church, and yet holding a recognised position with regard to it, which was able to apprehend the Apostolic teaching, and ready to receive it'<sup>1</sup>.

Numbers had thus been led to throw off polytheism, and, like Cornelius, to become worshippers of the true God, and students of the Scriptures. The well educated among them could not fail to see how striking had been the fulfilment of those prophecies which specially concerned the Gentile world, —the degradation of Egypt, the destruction of Tyre and Babylon, the rise of the Macedonian and Roman Empires; and, seeing how truly these predictions had been accomplished, they could not fail to watch anxiously for the fulfilment of those more mysterious Messianic prophecies which they found bound up with them.

And that, in point of fact, the whole Gentile world was at this time thus led (clearly by the dissemination of the Jewish Scriptures) to expect the rise of some great Prince in the East, is abundantly proved out of the writings of Virgil, Tacitus, and Suetonius.

That Virgil<sup>2</sup>, in his description of Him who is to inaugu-

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. HELLENIST.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil, *Pollio*, and *Æn.* vi. 791.

rate a new *golden age*, borrows the imagery and language of Isaiah, is admitted by all.

Tacitus<sup>1</sup> says, 'It was the persuasion of most persons, that the ancient books of the priests contained passages, which implied that the East would become powerful, and that some person or persons would arise in Judæa who would obtain the empire of the world.'

Suetonius<sup>2</sup> says, 'There had been circulating throughout the East an ancient and constant opinion, that a person or persons were destined to appear at this time in Judæa, who should obtain the government of the world.'

Passages to this effect might be multiplied ; but it is needless. It is abundantly clear that the Apostle of the Gentiles found the Gentiles in anxious expectation of some great Deliverer who should arise in the East, and should deliver them from that profound despondency of human affairs which seems at this time to have brooded like a curse over the whole Roman Empire. Numbers, too, he found in every city, who had thus been impelled to a diligent study of those Scriptures which every Sabbath were read and expounded in the Jewish Synagogues<sup>3</sup>. And thus, by the overruling Providence of God, the Gentile world had by the ministry of the Synagogues of the Dispersion, been marvellously prepared to receive the Gospel of Christ.

It was its acceptance by the Gentiles that (humanly speaking) determined the Jews to reject it. And thus on both sides was Prophecy fulfilled ; and the problem, which cannot fail to force itself on every careful reader of the Acts, is solved.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist.* v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Vespas.* iv.

<sup>3</sup> See the words of St. James in the Jerusalem Council, Acts xv. 21.

## CHAPTER II

## On the Synagogue and the Ecclesia

IN the interval between the Captivity and the Christian era, to meet the necessity of the case (for the Jews were now dispersed throughout the world, millions of them far out of reach of the Temple and its priestly ritual) there had risen up a new institution,—*the Synagogue*, with a ministry of its own (drawn from any tribe), entirely distinct from the Levitical priesthood. The Synagogue was simply an oblong chamber, usually pointing towards Jerusalem; its only furniture a chest containing a copy of the Law and Prophets, and a pulpit. No altar, no sacrifice, no priests. Here, every sabbath-day, or oftener, the Jews met; the men on one side, the women on the other (or in a separate gallery); the *Elders* of the congregation on seats at the Jerusalem end of the chamber, facing the people (Matt. xxiii. 6). These 'Elders' (Zkenim or Presbyters, called also Parnasim or Pastors) formed a sort of college or chapter, varying in number according to the number of Jewish residents (Mark v. 22; Luke vii. 3). They exercised a judicial power over the community, trying offenders (Luke xii. 11, xxi. 12), scourging them (Matt. x. 17, Mark xiii. 9) on the spot, or sending them for trial to Jerusalem (Acts ix. 2, xxii. 5), or excommunicating them (John xii. 42, xvi. 2)<sup>1</sup>. One of their number was responsible for conducting the worship of the Synagogue; he was called 'Shelfach,' or delegate, or spokesman (Luke viii. 41, 49, xiii. 14; Acts xviii. 8, 17); he led the form of prayer,—*e.g.*, the 'Hear, O Israel' of Deut. vi. 4, and the

<sup>1</sup> See also Matt. xviii. 17, where our Lord sanctions the continuation of this excommunication by the congregation (*ecclesia*) among Christians.



eighteen blessings, with a chanted Psalm ; then a first lesson from the Law ('Moses was read in the Synagogues every sabbath-day,' Acts xv. 21), and a second lesson from the Prophets (Luke iv. 17) were read, followed by an exposition by any Rabbi who might be present (Luke iv. 20 ; Acts xiii. 15). On the evening of the sabbath there was a feast. Besides the chief elder or delegate, and the other elders, there was also a servant or deacon (Matt. v. 25 ; Luke iv. 20), whose duty it was to look after the building, and act as schoolmaster during the week.

Such was the Synagogue, as described to us by the labours of Buxtorf (*de Synagogâ Judaicâ*) and of Vitringa, from whose great work (*de Synagogâ vetere*) the above account has been mainly taken.

That the Synagogue, not the Temple, furnished the pattern for the organization of the Christian Church, seems probable. In the very interesting passage about excommunication in Matt. xviii. 17, our Lord appears to take it for granted that it would be so, thereby implying His own divine sanction. And what could be more natural ? The Apostles had sabbath after sabbath attended the Synagogues of Galilee with their Master ; had there seen Him continually take His part as a Rabbi in the service, standing up to read the lesson of the day, and sitting down to expound it (Luke iv. 17, 20) ; had there, after His departure, themselves too found their readiest means of proclaiming His doctrines. On arriving at any of the great towns of Greece or Asia Minor, the Apostle naturally (and probably by Christ's command) betook himself to the Synagogue :— 'They came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the Synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the Synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Israelites and Proselytes, give audience.' So at Iconium, so at Thessalonica, so at Athens, so at Corinth, so at

Ephesus ; so wherever they went, week after week, month after month, so long as the congregation would suffer them. If, as at Beræa, the whole or greater part of the Elders and congregation listened and were converted, there the Synagogue at once, with all its officers and forms, became a Christian Church<sup>1</sup>. If, as at Thessalonica and Corinth, the majority rejected the new doctrine, then the Apostles withdrew with the minority into a neighbouring house belonging to one of the converts, the house of a Jason, or of a Justus ; and there continued their sabbath-day readings or Law and Prophets with Christian exposition. Hence the phrase we meet with so commonly, 'The Church in thy house.' From the Synagogue was borrowed the term 'Presbytery,'—a word unknown in classical Greek (applied in its Jewish sense in Luke xxii. 66 ; Acts xxii. 5, and in its Christian sense in 1 Tim. iv. 14) ; the term Angel (of Rev. i. 20, ii. 1) ; the name of Shepherds or Pastors (of Eph. iv. 11, and 1 Pet. v. 4) ; the Scripture Lesson and the Sermon ; the loud 'Amen' of the congregation (see 1 Cor. xiv. 16, and the famous passage in Justin's Apology, c. 67) ; the chanting of the Psalms in order ; the Ter Sanctus Hymn of Isaiah vi. ; as well as the discipline (Matt. xviii. 17 ; 1 Cor. vi.) ; the sentence of excommunication (1 Cor. v. 4) ; and the collection of alms (1 Cor. xvi. 2).

So far and no further the Jewish Synagogue seems to have been the model of the Christian Ecclesia. Vitringa carries his theory too far when he finds a type of the threefold Christian ministry in the Jewish Synagogue. There were *Presbyters* in the Synagogue, and there were *Presbyters*, corresponding to them both in name and in office, in the Christian Ecclesia. But there the parallel ends ; there was nothing in the constitution of the Synagogues corresponding to the oversight which the Apostles at first, and in the second generation the Bishops, exercised over groups of

<sup>1</sup> The very name was retained (James ii. 2) : 'If there come into your Synagogue.' (See also Heb. x. 25, and Ign. *ad Trall.* 5. *ad Polyc.* 3.)

Churches; nor was there anything in the Synagogue corresponding to the Diaconate of St. Paul's Pastoral Epistles. For there was but one Chazzan or Servitor for each Synagogue, and his office was more like that of a Parish Clerk than that of a Deacon.

To trace the growth of the three orders of ministry in the Christian Church is by no means easy.

The word *Deacon* was clearly applied in the early years to *all* Christian ministers. The Apostles apply it to themselves repeatedly<sup>1</sup>.

The seven men whose ordination is so carefully narrated in Acts vi., are nowhere called Deacons distinctively. As a distinctive term, marking a particular order in the ministry, it first occurs in Philip. i. 1, and in the Pastoral Epistles.

From the narrative in the Acts it is quite clear (1.) that there had been a dispensation of alms from the very first; and (2.) that the Apostles had never undertaken it. For when a murmuring arose, the Apostles said at once that *they* could not be expected to undertake it. *Some* officers, therefore, distinct from the Apostles, there must have been from the first. Who were they?

From the way in which St. Luke, in Acts xi. 30, speaks of the *Presbyters* of the Jerusalem Church, mentioning their existence as a matter of course, without having ever described their first appointment,—and from the way in which he describes St. Paul, also as a matter of course, ordaining *Presbyters* in all the new churches of Asia Minor (Acts xiv. 23),—it seems by far most probable, that from the very first, whenever the Christians met in congregation, some were set apart to occupy the seats at the upper end of the room, corresponding to the Presbyters' seats in the Synagogue. On these doubtless devolved the task of baptizing those many thousands on the day of Pentecost, and again after the healing of the cripple (Acts iv. 4). And on them doubtless

<sup>1</sup> See (in the Greek) Acts i. 17, 25, vi. 4, xx. 24, xxi. 19; Rom. xi. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 5, xii. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 3, 4; Eph. iii. 7, iv. 12; Col. i. 7, 23, 25.

devolved the office of presiding at the daily 'breaking of bread' in Holy Communion.

From the careful way in which the appointment of the Seven is described it would appear to have been a *special* ministry to meet a *special* need.

The constitution of the Diaconate as an order separate from the Presbyterate, cannot be traced earlier than the period of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome.

As to the *Episcopate*, it is clear that the words Bishop and Presbyter are used synonymously in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>; and no less clear to all who have impartially considered the question, that before the end of the first century, in the Churches of Antioch and Ephesus<sup>2</sup>, and early in the second century in the Western Churches<sup>3</sup>, the Episcopate had come to be a separate order of the ministry.

On this question the exhaustive essay of Professor Lightfoot, in his Commentary on Philippians, leaves nothing to be said.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Had the Sanhedrim the Power of Life and Death?

IN the *Key to the Gospels* (p. 79), the common opinion (maintained by Lardner) was adopted, that the Sanhedrim lost the power of inflicting capital punishment when Judæa became a Roman Province; and that this was the meaning

<sup>1</sup> Compare, in Acts xx., 17 with 28; and again, in Tit. i., 5 with 7.

<sup>2</sup> Repeated proofs of this may be found in the earliest text of Ignatius; see, for instance, his letter to Polycarp, section 6, 'Heed your Bishop, that God may heed you; I give my life for those who obey their Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons.'

<sup>3</sup> Professor Lightfoot shows that, in the list of Roman Bishops given by Irenæus (iii. 3. 3), the predecessors of Anicetus were chief-presbyters rather than Bishops. Clement of Rome never alludes to the Episcopal office, but uses the word as synonym of Presbyter (section 42). That Anicetus, however, was Bishop in our sense, when the aged Polycarp visited him (A.D. 162), is clear.

of the Jews' reply to Pilate (John xviii. 31), 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.'

The question is a difficult one. Most commentators, from Lardner and Grotius down to Alford and Andrews<sup>1</sup>, insist that the reply of the Jews quoted above admits of no other explanation; and support it by a passage quoted from the Talmud by Selden and Lightfoot, to the effect that 'forty years before the Temple was destroyed, judgment in capital cases was taken away from Israel' (*Jerusalem Gemara*, quoted by Selden *de Synedriis*, ii. 15. 11).

If this be so, Pilate's words, 'Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law,' must be understood as a taunt spoken in bitter irony; and the death of Stephen must have been a tumultuary outbreak, in defiance of Roman authority.

But the other side is defended by Biscoe in a very elaborate argument, in which Mr. Humphry and Dr. Döllinger<sup>2</sup> concur.

1. It is far more natural to suppose that Pilate was speaking seriously. He was quite serious in his other efforts to evade the responsibility of putting Jesus to death; and he was far too anxious not to offend the Jews, to taunt them with their loss of freedom, when they were so excited. And if he was speaking seriously, his words clearly imply that the Sanhedrim could inflict capital punishment,—unless indeed the Procurator interposed his *velo*.

2. Both Augustine (*Tract. cxiv. in Joan.*) and Chrysostom (*Hom. lxxxiii. in Joan.*) interpret the Jews' reply to mean, 'it is not lawful for us to put any one to death at this holy festival:'—just as they had used the self-same phrase before, 'it is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.' Clearly St. John's own comment on their reply—'that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die'—implies that it was by no means *a matter of course* that our Lord, if put to death, would be put to death by the Romans. Our

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of our Lord upon the Earth*, by Rev. Samuel J. Andrews (Strahan & Co., 1869),—a work that deserves to be better known.

<sup>2</sup> *First Age of the Church*, vol. ii. Appendix ii.

Lord's own special prediction of the manner of His death (Matt. xx. 19), and the careful way in which St. John here shows how that prediction came to be fulfilled, seem to imply that if things had been left to their usual course, the sentence of the Sanhedrim would have been executed by stoning so soon as the Feast was over. But after what they had witnessed on Palm Sunday, the Priests dared not run the risk (see Matt. xxvi. 5), and resolved therefore to force Pilate to execute Jesus in the Roman manner, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

3. Many other passages seem to imply that the Sanhedrim had the power of inflicting death (John v. 18, vii. 32, 51, viii. 5, 7, 59. xi. 53, xii. 10). Tertullus, in his oration before Felix (Acts xxiv. 6), complains to the Procurator that Lysias had interposed to prevent the Sanhedrim from judging Paul according to their own law. And that this meant death is clear not only from Acts xxvi. 31, but also from the nature of the offence ('profaning the Temple'), as we shall see in the sequel. Tertullus, a Roman lawyer, addressing a Roman Governor, would never have spoken thus, if the claim of the Sanhedrim had been illegal.

The death of James the Just, as recorded by Josephus (*Ant.* xxi. 8. 1), is another case in point. For when the Pharisees complained to Albinus that their high priest, Ananus (a Sadducee), 'had acted not rightly' in putting James to death, no question of Roman law was in their mind; but only a deep reverence for the character of St. James.

4. In reply to those who quote the passage from the Talmud, Biscoe shows that the passage was understood by Selden himself to mean, that for forty years before the fall of Jerusalem capital punishment had been, not altogether forbidden<sup>1</sup>, but much disused, owing to the venality of the Roman Procurators, who were constantly bribed to interfere in the criminal's favour.

5. That favoured Provinces were often allowed to live

<sup>1</sup> This notion Selden calls 'hallucinatio manifesta.' There was a '*desuetudo*,' not a '*sublatio* judiciorum capitalium.'

under their own laws is clear. Cicero, speaking of some Asiatic cities, writes, 'All these states, when once allowed to live under their own laws, seemed to draw fresh life from this privilege of self-government' ('omnes, suis legibus et judiciis usæ, *ἀντιπολιτείας* adeptæ revixerunt.'—*Ep. ad Attic.* vi. 2.) And that Judæa was so favoured, is plain from Josephus. He tells us (*Wars*, ii. 2. 3) that the Jews petitioned Augustus, on the fall of the Herodian family, to place them under a Roman Governor, in order that they might retain their own laws. And, that in point of fact they did retain them, is no less clear from the speeches of Titus (*Wars*, vi. 6. 2. and 2. 4), who reminded them how indulgent the Emperors had been to them, allowing them to live under their own laws, and to put to death any one who profaned their Temple, even though he were a Roman citizen. This last passage explains at once the claim which Tertullus made on behalf of the Sanhedrim to judge and punish Paul for profaning the Temple.

6. But the crowning proof that the Sanhedrim had the power is the case of Stephen. For that it was a judicial proceeding, and not a mere tumultuary outbreak, is rendered *probable* from the narrative :—he was taken outside the walls ; the witnesses seem to have cast the first stone, according to law (Deut. xvii. 7) ; Saul (as junior member of the Sanhedrim, perhaps) was commissioned to superintend the execution,—like an English Sheriff. And, finally, the question is surely decided by St. Paul's own reference to the proceeding in Acts xxvi. 10, where, alluding to the death of Stephen and those who suffered in the same persecution, he says :—'And when they were put to death *I gave my vote*' (for such is the word in the original, clearly implying a judicial procedure,) 'against them'.

That the Sanhedrim's exercise of the power might at all times be stayed by the Procurator must of course be admitted. And perhaps, on the whole, the safest conclusion is Dean Milman's, 'formed' (he says) 'on the study of the contemporary Jewish history,' that 'the power of the Sanhe-

drim, at this period of political change and confusion, on this, as well as on other points, was altogether undefined.'

One other point, in this connection, may be noticed :—it has been often asked, 'how came the High Priest or Sanhedrim to have jurisdiction over the Jews resident in Damascus, so that they could commission Saul to bring them bound to Jerusalem for punishment?' For Damascus was the second city of the Roman Province of Syria, and was entirely independent of Judæa.

Biscoe's answer seems to be the true one, that the decrees of C. Julius Cæsar, given by Josephus (in *Ant.* xiv. 10), granted to Hyrcanus and his successors this power; and that it extended to Jews in foreign cities seems clear from the decrees being ordered to be posted up in all the great cities of the Levant.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### *Narrative of the Acts illustrated from other Historians*

UNLIKE the Gospel narrative, which covers a few years only, and is confined within the narrow limits of the Holy Land, the Book of the Acts embraces more than thirty years, and conducts the reader into many provinces of the Roman Empire. It is therefore necessarily in continual contact with the general history of the period; and it becomes a matter of much interest to inquire how far its statements and allusions are in harmony with those of other writers.

One of the most learned men of the last century, who devoted many years to this inquiry, thus sums up the result of his researches: 'I dare be bold to say, there is no book extant in the world which has so much evidence of its truth, and so little to be urged against it, as this Book has'<sup>1</sup>.

Perhaps the simplest way of enabling the reader to judge for himself in this matter, will be to select a few of the many

<sup>1</sup> Biscoe, *History of the Acts confirmed from other Authors*, 1742.



points in which St. Luke's narrative challenges this kind of criticism, and bring together what is said by other writers on each point, leaving the reader to compare it with what he finds in St. Luke.

Let us take, for instance, the men of most note mentioned in the course of the Acts.

Of Caius Caligula and his mad attempt to set up his statue in the Jewish temple in the last year of his reign, we hear nothing in the New Testament; but of his uncle CLAUDIUS, who (according to Josephus) owed his succession to the Empire (Jan. 24, A.D. 41) to the influence of his friend Herod Agrippa, we hear twice in the Acts (xi. 28 and xviii. 2). With respect to the famine mentioned in the first passage, both Dion Cassius (lx. 11) and Tacitus (*Ann.* xii. 13) tell us that there were frequent famines in the reign of Claudius; and Josephus (*Ant.* xx. 5. 2) mentions a famine in Syria in the *fourth* year of his reign, which Eusebius (ii. 12) identifies with that foretold by Agabus. The second allusion to Claudius is in connection with the Jews' banishment from Rome. Suetonius (*Claud.* 25) makes express mention of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, and curiously connects it in some way with Christianity:—*'Judæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Româ expulit'*,—*the Jews who at the instigation of one Chrestus, were making constant disturbances, he expelled from Rome.* Claudius was poisoned October 13, A.D. 54, and was succeeded by Nero.

HEROD, grandson of Herod the Great, was called Agrippa by the Romans, in compliment to Agrippina, daughter of the great Agrippa. He it was who put James to death, and imprisoned Peter. That he was king of Judæa at this time we know from Josephus, who tells us (*Ant.* xix. 5. 1) that one of the first acts of Claudius was to reward his friend Agrippa for his services by giving him all the dominions of his grandfather Herod. Judæa, therefore, which since A.D. 6 had been governed by Roman Procurators (such as Pilate), had now a king. This was in A.D. 41. Three years afterwards he was smitten with the horrible disease which ended

his life. Josephus's account of his death (given at p. 58) corresponds strikingly with that of St. Luke, differing precisely as an uninspired narrative might be expected to differ from one inspired.

HEROD AGRIPPA II. was at Rome (aged 17) at the time of his father's death. Judæa again became a Roman Province under Procurators. But in A.D. 50 Claudius gave young Agrippa the kingdom of Chalcis, and afterwards that of Trachonitis and Abilene (Jos. *Ant.* xx. 7. 1). Josephus also tells us how careful this Agrippa was to stand well with the Romans, and to pay his respects to newly appointed Roman Governors. Thus he tells us how 'King Agrippa went to Alexandria to salute Alexander, who had been sent by Nero to govern Egypt' (*Wars*, ii. 15. 1). And again, how his sister Bernice used to accompany her brother on these state occasions, as for instance when 'they went together to Berytus with the intention of meeting Gessius, the Roman Governor of Judæa' (*Life*, 11). Gessius Florus held the same office that Felix held. The parallel therefore to Acts xxv. 13 is very complete.

FELIX (called Antonius Felix by Tacitus) was the fourth of the Procurators who governed the province of Judæa after the death of King Herod Agrippa I. St. Paul, in his defence before him (A.D. 58), alludes to his having been *for many years* a governor of Judæa (Acts xxiv. 10). According to Josephus (*Ant.* xx. 7. 1), Claudius sent out Felix on the banishment of Cumanus (A.D. 53). This would give five years, which would perhaps suffice for St. Paul's phrase; but Tacitus tells us that he had been previously joint-Governor with Cumanus (*Ann.* xii. 54), which would still better account for St. Paul's language. His hope to receive a bribe from St. Paul (suggested perhaps by what Paul had said about the sum of money with which he had come to Jerusalem, xxiv. 17<sup>1</sup>), is quite consistent with what Tacitus tells us of his mean unprincipled character (*Hist.* v. 9). He well might wish to win, if possible, the favour of the Jews on

<sup>1</sup> This coincidence was first pointed out by Lardner, quoted in Blunt's *Undesigned Coincidences*, p. 320 (6th ed.)

leaving the province (Acts xxiv. 27), for Josephus tells us what reason he had to dread their resentment, and how 'when Porcius Festus was sent by Nero to succeed him, the chief Jews of Cæsarea went to Rome to accuse Felix; and he would certainly have been brought to punishment, unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time in high favour' (*Ant.* xx. 8. 9). Josephus also tells us that during the procuratorship of Felix, an Egyptian impostor persuaded a multitude of miscreants (the 4000 of Acts xxi. 38) to go out from Jerusalem with him into the wilderness. Having increased their numbers to 30,000, he led them round about and back to the Mount of Olives, where Felix attacked and defeated them (*Wars*, ii. 13. 5, compared with *Ant.* xx. 8. 6). This must have happened some short time before the arrest of Paul, agreeing perfectly with the remark of Claudius Lysias.

Josephus further tells us how Felix, through the intervention of one Simon, a Magician<sup>1</sup>, contrived to persuade Drusilla (Agrippa's other sister) to be his wife;—compare Acts xxiv. 24.

PORCIUS FESTUS is mentioned by Josephus, in the passage above quoted, as successor to Felix, in agreement with Acts xxiv. 27. From another passage in Josephus (*Wars*, ii. 14. 1, it would seem that Festus was an upright governor, which accords with his straightforward conduct in the matter of St. Paul.

The recall of Felix and succession of Festus is one of the most important dates in the Acts of the Apostles. By very elaborate argument, Anger and Wieseler have proved it to be A.D. 60; the harmony of this date with very numerous coincidences in the Acts of the Apostles must strike every one who goes through these investigations.

GALLIO is mentioned by St. Luke as Procurator of the province of Achaia at the time of St. Paul's first visit to Corinth (A.D. 54). That this was the 'Junius Annæus Gallio' (brother of the philosopher Seneca), mentioned

<sup>1</sup> Whom some identify with the Simon Magus of the Acts.

several times by Tacitus and other Roman writers, can hardly be doubted. It appears from one of Seneca's Epistles (*Ep.* 104) that his brother Gallio had resided in Achaia, and left the province because the climate did not suit his health; and in his book *De Consol.* (cap. 16) he alludes to Gallio as one who had borne high office. His conduct, too, as it appears in St. Luke's narrative, resolutely refusing to be either beguiled (xviii. 13) or provoked (17) into abetting the Jews' violence, quite agrees with the epithet 'dulcis' (good-tempered) which both Seneca and Statius apply to him.

Such are a few of the coincidences of St. Luke's narrative with the general history of the period. The more minute coincidences are innumerable. St. Luke's accurate designation of all Roman or Greek magistrates whom he has occasion to mention has been remarked by scholars repeatedly. A province was under a *Proprator* (with Procurators under him, ἡγεμῶν) if it belonged to the Emperor, under a *Proconsul* (ἀνθύπατος) if it belonged to the Senate. The frequent transference of the provinces from the Senate to the Emperor, or from the Emperor to the Senate, rendered it difficult to be always sure of the proper style of the Governor. But St. Luke has never once been found in error. For instance, he calls Sergius Paulus *Proconsul* (Deputy in our translation) of Cyprus: and from Dion Cassius (liii. 12 and liv. 4, confirmed by a coin) we learn that Cyprus, though at first reserved to the Emperor by Augustus, was afterwards made over to the Senate. So with Achaia; Tiberius made it imperial (*Tac. Ann.* i. 76), but Suetonius tells us (*Claud.* 25) that Claudius in his fourth year gave it to the Senate. Therefore Gallio (in A.D. 54) is rightly termed Proconsul.

Again: a city that was a military colony, like Philippi, was governed by Duumvirs or Prætors (*Cic. de Leg. Agrar.* 34), whereas a free city, like Thessalonica, continued under its native constitution. Most accurately therefore does St. Luke (in Acts xvi.) speak of the 'Prætors' (στρατηγοί) of Philippi, and of the Popular assembly (δῆμος) and Politarchs

of Thessalonica. On a Roman arch still standing at Thessalonica, this very title of its magistrates may be seen inscribed<sup>1</sup>.

Even in speaking of the Roman Governor of the remote island of Melita, St. Luke's never-failing accuracy may be noticed: not only do we know that it had been conquered by the Romans in the second Punic War, but in an inscription dug up in the island, the very title which St. Luke gives to Publius is found applied to its governor (*πρόεδρος Μελιταιῶν*). The fact of the inhabitants speaking a Punic dialect (akin to Hebrew) accounts at once for St. Luke calling them 'barbarians' (*i.e.*, foreigners to Greece and Rome), and for St. Paul being able to make himself understood by them.

Almost the only historical inaccuracy attributed to St. Luke occurs in Acts v. 36. He there makes Gamaliel allude to an insurrection of one Theudas, about forty years before that time. As Josephus (*Ant.* xx. 5. 1) happens to mention an insurrection headed by a man of the same name about ten years *after* this speech of Gamaliel, St. Luke is charged with an anachronism. But Theudas was a common name; and Josephus himself tells us of many insurrections as having occurred at the time alluded to by Gamaliel (*Ant.* xvii. 10. 4-8) under nameless leaders, one of whom may well have been the Theudas to whom Gamaliel alluded.

## CHAPTER V

### On the Chronology of the Acts

THE Chronology of the Acts is full of difficulty.

I. One date only can be fixed with certainty—the death of Herod Agrippa.

Josephus tells us (*Wars*, ii. 11. 6) that he died after reigning three years. As he tells us elsewhere (*Ant.* xix. 8. 2) that he received his kingdom immediately after the accession of Claudius, early in A.D. 41, the date of his death must be in the spring of A.D. 44. From St. Luke's narrative we

<sup>1</sup> Conybeare and Howson's *St. Paul*.

gather that it was after the Passover. This date therefore is clearly fixed for us.

All the events of the first twelve chapters have to be arranged between the date of our Lord's Ascension (A.D. 29 or 30) and A.D. 44.

II. One other date may be fixed with a great amount of probability—the recall of Felix.

Josephus tells us (*Ant.* xx. 8. 9) that Felix was followed to Rome by his accusers, and only saved from punishment by the influence of his brother Pallas, 'who at that time was held in the greatest honour by Nero.' Now we know from Tacitus (*Ann.* xiv. 65) that Nero killed Pallas for the sake of his wealth in A.D. 62. Josephus also mentions that Burrus was then living, and Burrus died not later than February 62 (*Ann.* xiv. 51).

These accusers must have gone to Rome therefore in the preceding summer (while the sea was still open) at latest. On the other hand Felix's recall cannot well have been before A.D. 60, for two years previously St. Paul had spoken of him as having been for many years in Judæa (*Acts* xxiv. 10), and we know that he was appointed in A.D. 53. Putting these facts together, it appears that Felix must have been recalled A.D. 60 or 61. One more note of time remains, which seems to make 61 impossible. St. Paul reached Rome in the spring of the year following the recall of Felix; and he was delivered, not to the *Prefects*, but to the *Prefect* (*Acts* xxviii. 16). Now, if he had arrived in the spring of 62, he would have found *two* Prefects of the Prætorians (Rufus and Tigellinus, *Tac. Ann.* xiv. 51); but in the previous year there was but *one*, viz. Burrus. Therefore St. Paul's arrival is fixed in the spring of 61; and therefore Felix's recall must be dated 60.

With these two leading dates to guide us,—44 for the death of Herod Agrippa, and 60 for the recall of Felix,—it remains to deduce the rest of the Chronology.

III. Starting from the last-named year, and calculating backwards, we obtain the following dates from St. Luke's narrative:—

A.D.

58. (Acts xxiv. 27) Just before Pentecost ; his arrival at Jerusalem ; three months of the preceding winter in Greece (Acts xx. 3).

57. (Spring) Paul leaves Ephesus (see p. 102).

54. Commencement of Paul's three years at Ephesus (Acts xx. 31).

52. (Autumn) Commencement of his eighteen months at Corinth (Acts xviii. 11). Allowing two years for the 'teaching and preaching' at Antioch (Acts xv. 35), and for the journeyings of Acts xvi. and xvii., we obtain

50 for the Council at Jerusalem.

Adopting this date, A.D. 50, as a new starting-point, and identifying Paul's visit to the Council in that year with the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal. ii. 1, we obtain from that verse

A.D.

38, reckoning the fourteen years *inclusively*<sup>1</sup>, for St. Paul's fifteen days' visit to St. Peter, Gal. i. 18 ; and

35 for his conversion, or 36 if we reckon the three years of Gal. i. 18 *inclusively*.

That his conversion was A.D. 36 is probable for two reasons :—

1. In that year Pilate was sent to Rome, and Vitellius (to whom Damascus as second city of Syria belonged) visited Jerusalem, and did all he could to win the favour<sup>2</sup> of the Jews. Thus the difficulty of Saul's commission to Damascus is explained.

2. In the year 37 Vitellius was ordered to march against Aretas, but desisted<sup>3</sup> on hearing of the death of Tiberius. Aretas may then have occupied Damascus, which would explain the allusion to St. Paul's escape in 2 Cor. xi. 32,—Aretas being anxious to outbid Vitellius for the Jews' favour.

<sup>1</sup> In reckoning a term of years the Jews counted the fragments of years at each end of the term as whole years.

<sup>2</sup> Jos. Ant. xviii. 4. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Jos. Ant. xviii. 5. 3.

It will be observed how well the date 50 for the Council harmonizes with the date independently assigned to Herod Agrippa's death. Starting from Herod's death, and following St. Luke's narrative, we obtain

A.D.

44. Herod's death (Acts xii. 23).

45. The famine<sup>1</sup>, and Paul and Barnabas's mission with alms to Jerusalem, which seems to have been *after* Herod's persecution of the Apostles, for in Acts xi. 30 they are said to have found the Presbyters only, not the Apostles (see Acts xii. 17) at Jerusalem. The opening words of Acts xii. go back to the time of the *prophecy*, not its subsequent fulfilment, which is mentioned by way of anticipation in Acts xi. 29, 30.

46. Paul and Barnabas's missionary tour in Asia Minor, occupying about two years. (The narrative seems to imply a long sojourn at Derbe.)

48. Their return. 'They abode a long time' at Antioch, two or three years probably, bringing us again to 50 as the date of the Council at Jerusalem.

Thus, relying on our two leading dates—Herod's death in 44, and the recall of Felix in 60—and for the rest on such scattered notes of time as the narrative supplies, we may construct with some degree of confidence the following Chronological Table, which will be found to differ but little from that of Wieseler, confessedly the greatest authority on the subject.

As in the *Key to the Four Gospels*, the old traditional date of our Lord's Crucifixion, which the Fathers of the first five centuries seem to have adopted without hesitation, is here assumed, fixing it in the consulship of the Gemini<sup>2</sup>, *i.e.*, A.D. 29, thirty-two years and a quarter after our Lord's birth.

<sup>1</sup> Jos. *Ant.* xx. 5. 2, in the Procuratorship of Fadus, *i.e.*, after 44.

<sup>2</sup> See Tertull. *Adv. Jud.* viii.; Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 54; and Epiphanius (quoted by Greswell, x. 444). For the consulship of Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus, see Tac. *Ann.* v. 1.



A. D.		PAGE	ACTS
	TIBERIUS, Emperor since Aug. 19, A.D. 14, . . . . .		...
	Pontius Pilate, Procurator since A.D. 26, . . . . .		...
	Caiaphas, High Priest since A.D. 25, . . . . .		...
29	Ascension, . . . . .	1	1. 9
	Pentecost, . . . . .	7	2. 1
	Lame Man healed, . . . . .	12	3. 1
	Arrest of Peter and John, . . . . .	14	4. 1
	Death of Ananias and Sapphira, . . . . .	24	5. 1
	The Twelve imprisoned, . . . . .	18	5. 18
34	Appointment of the Seven, . . . . .	27	6. 1
36	Pilate ordered to Rome by Vitellius, . . . . .		...
	Vitellius visits Jerusalem; deposes Caiaphas, . . . . .		...
	Stephen's Martyrdom, . . . . .	33	7. 1
	Saul's Persecution, . . . . .		8. 3
	Dispersion; Philip's Ministry, . . . . .	35	8. 4
	Foundation of Church in Samaria, . . . . .	37	8. 14
	Saul's Conversion, . . . . .	41	9. 1
37	CAIUS CALIGULA, Emperor, Mar. 16, . . . . .		...
	Vitellius abandons war with Aretas, . . . . .		...
38	Saul escapes from Damascus (2 Cor. xi. 32), . . . . .	46	...
	His brief visit to Jerusalem (Gal. i. 18), . . . . .	46	9. 26
	He retires to Tarsus, . . . . .		9. 30
	Herod Agrippa visits his Tetrarchies, . . . . .		...
39	Herod Antipas banished to Lyons, . . . . .		...
40	Caius orders his Statue to be set up in the Temple, . . . . .	49	...
	The Churches of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee 'have rest,' . . . . .		9. 31
	Peter's Visit to Cornelius, . . . . .	51	10. 1
	Rise of Gentile Church at Antioch, . . . . .	54	11. 20
	Barnabas fetches Saul from Tarsus, . . . . .	56	11. 25
	Agabus prophesies a Famine, . . . . .		11. 28
41	CLAUDIUS, Emperor, Jan. 24, . . . . .		...
	Herod Agrippa made King of Judæa, . . . . .		...

A.D.		PAGE	ACTS
44	He kills James and imprisons Peter, Peter (and all the Apostles?) leaves Jerusalem, . . . . .	57	12. 1
	Herod's Death; Cuspius Fadus, Procurator, . . . . .	58	12. 17
	The Famine, . . . . .		...
	Barnabas and Saul go with Alms to Jerusalem, . . . . .		{ 11. 30
			{ 12. 25
46	Ordination of Barnabas and Saul, . . . . .	62	13. 3
	Their Missionary Tour to the Gentiles, . . . . .	64	...
48	Their return to Antioch, and abode there, . . . . .	67	14. 28
	Ananias made High Priest, . . . . .		...
49	Herod Agrippa II., King of Chalcis, Council at Jerusalem, . . . . .		...
50	Peter rebuked by Paul at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11), . . . . .	71	15. 1
		75	...
51	Paul sets forth on Second Mission with Silas, . . . . .	78	15. 40
	Finds Timothy at Lystra, . . . . .	79	16. 1
	Founds Galatian Churches, . . . . .		16. 6
52	Crosses over into Europe, . . . . .	81	16. 11
	Founds Churches of Philippi and Thessalonica, . . . . .	82	17. 1
	Paul at Athens, . . . . .	86	17. 15
	Reaches Corinth late in the year, . . . . .	88	18. 1
53	Writes 1 and 2 Thess., . . . . .		...
	(Felix, Procur.); H. Agrippa II., King of Trachonitis, . . . . .		...
54	Quits Corinth in spring; a few days at Ephesus, . . . . .	93	18. 18
	Keeps Pentecost at Jerusalem, . . . . .		18. 22
	A few weeks at Antioch, . . . . .		...
	Arrives at Ephesus, . . . . .	94	19. 1
	Founds Ephesian Church (3 years); writes 1 Cor., . . . . .	96	...
57	Leaves Ephesus in spring; writes 2 Cor., . . . . .	102	20. 1
	NERO, Emperor, Oct. 13, . . . . .		...

A. D.		PAGE	ACTS
	Three months at Corinth ; writes Gal. and Rom., . . . . .	105	20. 3
58	Passover at Philippi ; a week at Troas, . . . . .	107	20. 6
	Farewell Address to Ephesian Presbyters, . . . . .		20. 17
	Arrives at Jerusalem, . . . . .	110	21. 17
	Arrested about Pentecost (May 9), . . . . .	111	21. 33
	Defence before Sanhedrim ; sent to Cæsarea, . . . . .	115	23. 1
	Defence before Felix and Ananias, . . . . .	116	24. 1
	Two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea, . . . . .	117	...
60	Festus succeeds Felix as Procurator, . . . . .	119	24. 27
	Paul accused by Jews, appeals to Cæsar, . . . . .	120	25. 1
	Defence before Agrippa and Festus, . . . . .	121	26. 1
	Embarks for Italy (Autumn), . . . . .	123	27. 1
	Shipwreck ; three winter months in Melita, . . . . .	126	...
61	Lands at Puteoli ; reaches Rome (Spring), . . . . .	131	28. 14
	Two years in Military Custody at Rome, . . . . .	132	...
	Writes Ephes., Coloss., Philem., and Philip., . . . . .		...
62	Martyrdom of James 'the Lord's Brother,' . . . . .	147	...
68	Paul again imprisoned at Rome, . . . . .		...
	Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul in the last year of Nero according to Jerome, . . . . .	76	...

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